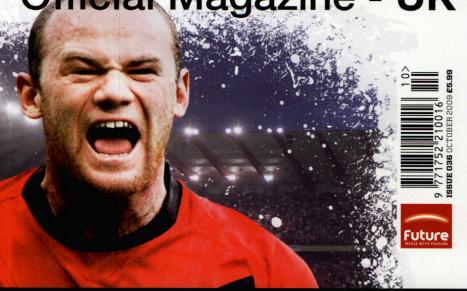
PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK

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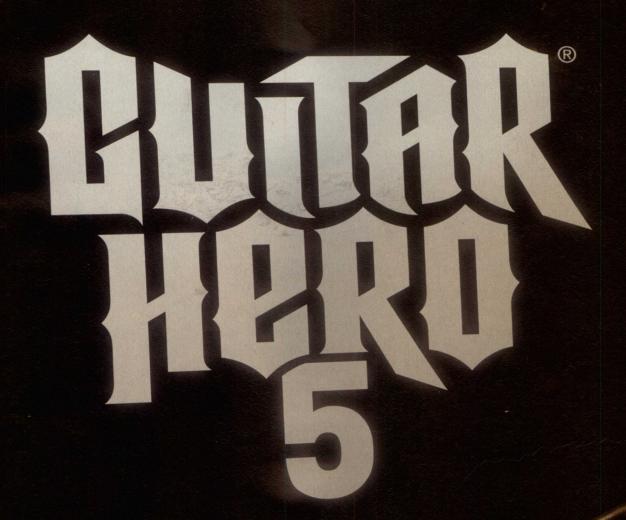


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Welcome



So which cover did you get? As a Palace fan I fought hard for a fourth version,

which would see a mulleted Shaun Derry immortalised on OPM-branded paper, but was shouted down. Boo.

In better news, we spent the entire month jumping on FIFA 10 at every available opportunity weekends, late nights, naughty ten minute spells when Helen wasn't looking - and I'm happy to report that EA's football giant plays brilliantly. The greatest compliment I can pay it is that, for the first time in my four years on OPS2 and OPM, it's elbowed PES aside and become our lunchtime game of choice. Find out exactly what's so great about it in our world exclusive review. which starts on page 98.

Those of you who follow us on Twitter (@OPM UK) or Facebook will know we recently launched the OPM podcast. The second episode is now available on iTunes, with all our news from the recent Gamescom show in Germany, and further discussion of the big games in this month's mag, like the going-to-be-huge Uncharted 2. So please do give us a listen. If it helps swing it, I don't mention Palace once. Drake 1, Derry 0.

Ben Wilson

Deputy editor

COVER REVIEW



FEATURES



WAR STORIES

Talking guns, aliens and new game Borderlands with Gearbox's Randy Pitchford.



IN THE MOOD FOR...

All of PlayStation's best OMG moments with none of the time consuming playing.





HANDS-ON WITH

We unleash our harshest critics on Sony's

catdogmonkeything. No, you can't kill it.	
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COLIN MCRAE

The racing series stays ahead of the pack with filthy new cars, tracks and tunes.



MINI NINJAS

Burping, farting, sneezing... is this gassy adventure just Hitman for kids?

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Who we are...



Tim Clark Editor-in-chief

Tim's favourite part of hosting his first SingStar party? No one spilling the blue punch on his carpet.

Game of the month Batman: Arkham Asylum Sports team of choice The Arsenal



Ben Wilson Deputy editor

Developed in Famous style powers after being electrocuted. Using them to charge his iPhone.

Game of the month Madden NFL 10 Sports team of choice Crystal Palace



Leon Hurley Commissioning editor

Single-handedly wrote the mag for two days straight on tea, yoghurt and frowns.

Game of the month COD WAW Nazi Zombies Sports team of choice



Rachel Penny

A post holiday tantrum was averted thanks to Ben's emergency delivery of peanut butter cups.

Sports team of choice Liberty City Penetrators



Nathan Ditum

Fully got to grips with the phrase working holida when, on his week off, did more work than usual.

Game of the month **Burnout Paradise** England Rugby Union



Helen Woodey

Operations editor

Bad back brought on new request for a personal assistant. "Someone to pass me things." Answer still "no".

Game of the month Guitar Hero 5 Sports team of choice Cosmos netball club



David Boddington

Bodders continues to sacrifice his own opinion to stay in favour with the boss. Yes Tim. I love this music.

Game of the month IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey Ipswich Town



James Jarvis

Assistant producer

Elicited boos and swears on naming his sports team of choice. Feel free to join in.

Game of the month Burnout Paradise Sports team of choice

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PlayStation

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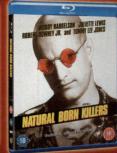
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On your Clisc

Nee naw, nee naw... Here comes the OPM ambulance, ready to cure you of boredom for the next month. Dr Ratchet will now administer the best demos, stat! I'll be pumping supersized racer Fuel into your veins, dosing you with

Mini Ninjas adventure medicine, and dabbing your brow with the Overlord II flannel of enjoyable evil. You can recover with

Zen Pinball, then head to physio for some thumb rehab with old-school wannabe Crystal Defenders. I'm also prescribing a further ten demos to help rebuild your strength. What? You'll need to take some time off work? Sounds fine to me...

Rachel Penny News editor



Overlord II

Rule over peasants, yetis and your minion followers in the game that's all about conquering the world without having to do any heavy lifting. As the new Overlord you must smite mythical monsters and face up to the ruling Empire.

This month's exclusive highlights...



Mini Ninjas

Cute but deadly, the tiny martial arts experts do battle against evil samurai with cunning, speed and a big helping of kuji magic.



Fuel

Race on quads and trucks across 5,560° miles (count 'em! Actually, don't) of terrain as you aim to rule the post apocalyptic roads.



inFamous

Good? Evil? That choice is yours. What is certain is that as an electric superhero in a ruined city, you're going to get to zap people into human bacon.



Fight Night Round 4

Ricky Hatton and Manny Pacquiao do battle in the ring to give you a taste of boxing at its prettiest, brutish and nose-exploding best.



What if my disc doesn't work, send If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St. Bath BA1 2BW and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.com.

Also on the disc this month: Playable Crystal Defenders, Zen Pinball, Marvel vs Capcom 2, Up: The Video Game, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10, Red Faction: Guerrilla, Red Faction: Guerrilla Multiplayer, UFC 2009: Undisputed, Wheelman, Motorstorm: Pacific Rift Video Assassin's Creed II, Inferno Pool, Split Second

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We test handheld's next generation

A quick fumble in an E3 backroom model at New York fashion w

ages ago was never going to be enough. This month, OPM finally got to spend some quality time with its new mistress – a delicious young lady named PSPgo. And a damn fine date Sony's new handheld turned out to be, too, even though we only made it to first base.

(Almost certainly a good thing.)

The first feature you notice is the

weight – it's lighter than a Russian

GT PSP!

model at New York fashion week. The second is the sweet, sliding control pad that sweeps out from beneath the screen. There's no denying Sony knows how to make sexy hardware. Despite the smaller dimensions, PSPgo still feels comfortable when you're playing, and mercifully at no point were we gripped by crippling finger cramp. So maybe we can learn to love Mr Nub after all. Maybe.

Digital future

The main difference between this and the old PSP is the lack of the UMD drive. All games will be downloadable from the online PlayStation Store. We spoke to Adam Grant, Sony's hardware product manager, about why the PSPgo has taken this brave step into solely digital distribution, "With the steady expansion of the broadband network infrastructure, the number of users who download and enjoy digital entertainment content has been increasing remarkably and people are changing the way they consume digital content."

So faster broadband means there's no need for physical discs (when was the last time you actually bought a CD?), and the PSPgo, with its fancy 16GB of flash memory, is designed to reflect that. There have been vague mutterings from the Sony camp about some sort of replacement scheme

"There's no denying Sony knows how to make sexy hardware."





Hold the phone

serious player on the casual gaming market, and uses a similar method of digital distribution to PSPgo's. But does Adam Grant, Sony's hardware product manager, see it as competition? In a word, no: "Everything about the PSP is geared towards being a gaming device and an entertainment device. As such PSPgo can offer a much more powerful gaming experience, while also offering a great platform for you to enjoy other entertainment experiences, such as music and video on the go."

"The GT team's perfectionism has carried over onto PSP."

for upgraders with a stack of UMDs, but when we spoke to Sony it couldn't tell us what the exact plan was.

Play time

Enough about the hardware. Once you're done fooling with the slidey screen, you'll want some actual games to play and, according to Grant, there'll be plenty. "We will announce the exact number closer to launch, but we anticipate having more than 50 available by the end of the year," he says. OPM went hands-on with two of the announced titles, Invizimals and Gran Turismo, but Grant has his own favourite. "I'm looking forward to the fantastic tower defence game, Fieldrunners, by Subatomic. The PSP

version will contain exclusive maps, units and weapons."

Monster-grabbing game Invizimals is surprisingly involving. You pick it up a sceptic, then 15 seconds later you're rummaging about trying to find something that will summon a new creature. You plug in the PSP camera, then scan different objects (pens, bottles, anything) until the game senses a monster (it works by detecting colours, with different shades calling up different creatures) which you can then trap, after dodging some fireballs or just giving your prey a slap. It's like a daft alternate-reality version of Pokemon, and fun with it.

But it's Gran Turismo that really shows off the machine's capabilities.

As I swept my Ferrari Enzo (red, naturally) around the famous Nürburgring it was clear that the team's obsessive perfectionism has carried over to the PSP version. Colours were vivid, car renders razor sharp, and the sound of the Ferrari engine rumbled happily from PSPgo's speakers. It's packed with detail too: each track's info lists its elevation and length, and cars come with essential data like speed, torque and weight.

PSPgo will be out in October, with pre-orders currently running at a pretty steep £230. An expensive lady, then... but once you've handled her sleek curves, you try saying no.

See a video of the new PSPgo in action at Sony's official site, snipurl.com/pq06w.



Warne's guide to online sledging

350

A mind game master class from the cricketing legend



Booth chatter

Since retirement Warne has stepped into the commentary booth, in both the real world and for Ashes Cricket 2009 on PS3. So how did he find his involvement in the game? "There were a lot of lines I had to deliver, and some ad-libbing as well. It took about six hours. When you're in the studioyou're not sure how it'll work. Then you see the game and hear the commentary over a six and you go, 'Ah, I get it now.' I was very happy with it. But originally I thought, 'This is ridiculous, what am I doing?!"

Shane Warne is known as cricket's greatest ever spin bowler. But the Australia side he starred in throughout the '90s and early 2000s was as famous for its sledging capabilities as its dominant bowling and stubborn yet brilliant batting. The idea of sledging is to affect someone's physical performance by playing mind games with them - and Warne tells OPM the tactic isn't confined to the cricket pitch. A keen gamer (he plays with his three kids and insists "they always beat me"), Warne says sledging can also be put to good use playing videogames online.

Contrary to the reputation those tough-talking Aussies carried, and to what some of our COD-playing friends across the pond might think, it's not all about dropping F-bombs. "The best way you can get under the

skin of your opponents is actually by having a laugh about something," he informs us. "Just general banter to try and offput them. If you know the person well it helps." But what if you don't, as is often the case online? Then try talking nonsense instead: "It can be something completely irrelevant to what you're doing. A couple of times when I was bowling, Ian Healy was behind the stumps and he'd say, 'What club do you reckon?' And I'd say, 'about an eight iron, maybe a seven iron into this wind... The batsman would be like, 'what are you talking about?' It's all about distraction - nothing to do with them or the game you're both playing.

Abuse with care

Interestingly, Warne insists that while winding someone up can be used to

throw an opponent off his game, it's not always the best way forward. Sledging can actually make a strong rival even more formidable. "If you're going to say anything, you need to be in the moment. Don't pre-prepare what you're going to say, and pick the right place to say it. There's no point revving up someone who's really good at whatever you're playing, or they'll wipe the floor with you."

So there you have it: with a heavy dose of banter, some humour, and a predisposition to talking nonsense, you should now be able to get a mental edge over anyone you meet online. Unless they're already really, really good. In which case, it sounds like the big swears are as good a tactic as any.

His on-field career behind him, Warne recently took up poker. Read all about it on his blog, shanewarne.com,



Heavy Rain gets new talent

PS3-exclusive thriller reveals new playable characters



Death race

Quantic Dream has made a lot of noise about fon onse about characters' mortality in Heavy Rain. Any of the four people you play as can die at any time. Rather than being seen as failure, this simply becomes part of the story, and control switches to one of the survivors. So play carelessly, kill everyone and this could be the shortest aame ever.

You might remember the names Scott Shelby and Ethan Mars. They first appeared on the teaser poster for Heavy Rain a year ago, along with the previously revealed journalist Madison Paige and drug addict FBI profiler Norman Jayden. Shelby and Mars now finish the full playable line-up of the four central characters. Scott Shelby is a private detective, presumably investigating the Origami Murders around which the story revolves. His relationship with the others isn't clear, but we've seen him before – meeting the as-yet-unnamed prostitute character played by Aurélie Bancilhon, who originally appeared in The Casting, a 2007 tech demo for

Heavy Rain's face and motion capture. Ethan Mars appears to be a crazy thief and has been seen talking to Jayden in a room covered in crucifixes. Quantic Dream is giving little else away but our secret squirrels will know more soon. Watch this space.

Check out the E3 trailer and see if you can spot Shelby and Mars in the footage at snipurl.com/pql5z.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about





Is Modern Warfare 2 ripping you off?

Activision's credit conscience goes missing in action

Special edition

Collector's editions are another popular way for for publishers to make dition (complete with hight vision goggles) is DJ dero's £120 Renegade Edition (comes with table and music CD), and Assassin's Creed II

Like its predecessor, there's no doubt Modern Warfare 2 is shaping up to be the game of the year, both critically and commercially. So it felt like a hard kick in our tender 'special area' when publisher Activision announced that the game would retail at a ridiculous £54.99 (The pictured Prestige Edition will set you back £120). We made that face too. So is there a genuine reason behind the hefty charge, or is the publisher just milking its best game for all the moolah it can make?

We went directly to Activision to ask for an explanation, but they refused to talk, saying only that, "We don't comment on our pricing strategies." Retailer Game gave us a similar line in silent treatment, saying, "We don't comment about future pricing."

It was left to another publisher to offer an explanation for the costly

price hike, with THQ's executive vice president Ian Curran blaming the global recession. "Exchange rates between the Euro and the Pound are making it difficult to show an acceptable operating margin in the UK," he says. Activision CEO Bobby Kotick would actually like you to pay more for his prize product, recently commenting to investors that, "If it was left to me, I'd raise the prices further." This from the man who allegedly earned \$15 million last year.

Cashing in

Industry analyst Michael Pachter thinks the price a "test", saying, "Activision knows it has a 'hot' game, knows the market will pay an additional 10%, and decided to increase price accordingly." Former Sony Europe president Chris Deering, however, justifies the increase: "In order to price games at a level where they would support the industry like they did ten years ago, they'd have to be £70." Meanwhile other companies, like EA, say they're not planning any price rises. So FIFA is safe... for now.

Even so, gamers aren't happy. On GRcade.com Lazy Fair commented, "I feel conned paying £40, never mind £55. Activision are scumbags." Totalgamingnetwork.com even conducted a poll, with 80% in favour of boycotting the game. But ramsy66 at Neowin.net summed up the reality of the situation, admitting: "That's a ridiculous price. I'll still pay it though." The sad truth is that whatever the reason for the rise, most of us will pay that extra £15 to play it first.

Will you pay more for your favourite games? Tell us at opm@futurenet.com or on Twitter, add OPM UK.





5 Ratchet's new DIY weapons

How A Crack In Time lets you build your own blasters

Constructo Bomb Assembly



Weapon of choice

upwards, hitting flying enemies. While swapping Toxic for Shrapnel will resul in the blast firing out lethal fragments.



The Bomb Glove

Constructo Pistol Assembly



Constructo Pistol Variant



Gun show

Insomniac held a competition to design one of A Crack In Time's weapons. The winning gun was the Spiral Of Death which shoots buzz saws that can be controlled whilt they re in flight. Unusual, but it was far from the weirdest, according to creative director, Brian Allgeier. "We had a few cat launchers (cat-a-pault), weapons that turned enemies into female lombaxes, a shotgun that gave enemies irritable bowel syndrome, and even shotgun-nunchucks."

The Ratchet & Clank series is famed for insane weaponry – The Groovitron (a disco grenade that forces enemies to dance) is one example of developer Insomniac's talent for finding innovative ways to down enemies. For the latest instalment, A Crack In Time, they're taking it a genius step further: providing you with the parts to build your own lethal WMDs.

"The Constructo Pistol and Constructo Bomb Glove can be totally tailored to your own play style," says creative director, Brian Allgeier. "For instance, the Constructo Pistol can be changed to be rapid fire, or use a charge up shot. The Constructo Bomb Glove can be switched to a timer or proximity bomb, and mods can change the type of explosion." There are 36 different combinations, enough to satisfy even the most particular gunslinger. And there's more: "There are also cool upgrades, such as the Bomblet upgrade, which releases small bouncing explosives – much like the original Bouncer from the PS2 games."

Obsessive types shouldn't panic either. According to Allgeier, you can still spend hours collecting bolts and holo-plans. "Of course, there will be a new RYNO [Rip You A New One] weapon – that's part of the franchise DNA." And here's an insider tip from Insomniac: fans of the series should hang on to their saves, as weapons like the Groovitron will return, and your old game data will help you get your paws on them a whole lot faster.

Check out the latest trailers for Ratchet And Clank: A Crack In Time at snipurl.com/ounjs.





Brain of Britain

Meet the winner of the UK's Buzz! Championships

The Buzz! on the comp floor...



Mona Quintanilla
Associate producer, Relentles
"I can't wait until the final. It's
great meeting our audience."



Glen Gilson
Third place runner up:
"It's a huge community thing



Andrew Evans
Second place runner up:
"There was half a second in
it but the best managemen."

If you've got a pub quiz coming up, you might want to try and get lan Stewart on your team. The clever Scot has just been crowned UK Buzz! champion after a fiercely contested trivia battle on the game in London. As well as earning a spot at the International final in Spain, he also picked up champagne, a weekend at a posh hotel and a shiny gold crown.

Stewart, who had travelled from Edinburgh for the event, was shocked by his win. "Unbelievable," he tells us, "I'm over the moon." Clearly surprised by the result, he says that when the contestants played online together in preparation for the final, there wasn't a clear favourite for the title. "It was fair share," he insists. So



Wonder why theesh boffinsh dropped out early?

will he be playing Buzz! all day until the international final? "I can't!" he says, "I've got to go to work! But yes, I'll be doing a lot of practising."

Final countdown

The opening stages of the Buzz! Brain Of The UK competition ran between April and May, with players uploading their high scores to the leaderboard. The top 32 were then invited to the finals in London. Watching the competitors at their podiums, it was easy to see these were no ordinary players. In the High Stakes round, where players bet points depending on their confidence with a subject, all bet the maximum amount for every question, and all got every one right.



Our Rachel impresses the victor with her counting.

Of course the beauty of Buzz! is that it can all change in the final round, where speed matters almost as much as getting the answer right. In the end, it all came down to spinach, with a question about the ingredient for the Indian dish of Sag Aloo. Stewart was milliseconds quicker, and as Andrew Evans' Napoleonic character fell into the pit, the victor looked stunned.

While the runners-up were presented with champagne, Stewart was crowned UK Champion in front of a cheering ground like a pale, Scottish pageant winner. He goes on to join the 14 competitors at the world final in Spain for the chance to win the grand prize – a Mini Cooper Clubman. Who says playing games doesn't pay?



They've got plenty of extra brain cells to kill off.

The Big 10 Stories everyone's talking about



019

Even Hollywood loves Nazi zombies

New film brings life to World At War's undead

Snow man

Born in 1979 in Norway, Wirkola's first movie was, Naked Gun-style spoof of Kill Bill called Kill Bill; and a surprise hit in Norway - that gave us the opportunity to do Dead Snow." His next project is script called Hansel And Gretel-Witch Hunters, which takes a look at what the house-munching kids are up to 15 years after their escape from the cannibal crone. As for a Dead Snow follow-up, Wirkola is already in discussions for a sequel.

"I haven't got to the Nazi zombie level yet!" cries Tommy Wirkola when we ask him about Call Of Duty: World At War's online splatter-the-undead-fascist mode. It's disappointing for Wirkola, because as well as describing himself as a big gamer, he's a film director who knows a thing or two about Nazi zombies. His film, Dead Snow – out on Blu-ray on 31 August – pits ski-cabin-bound students against the reanimated Reich in the north of Norway.

It's basically a lot like our multiplayer obsession of the moment, except with extra pretty girls and a lot less of editor-in-chief Tim continually hogging the best guns. The similarity is a coincidence, but Wirkola has an explanation: undead Nazis are the coolest enemies going: "What's more evil than a Nazi zombie? You can do the most horrible things to these creatures and no one would even care." And horrible things do happen – chainsaw flayings, snowmobile pile-ups, and one really nasty bit where a zombie's eyes are popped right out. It's brilliant.

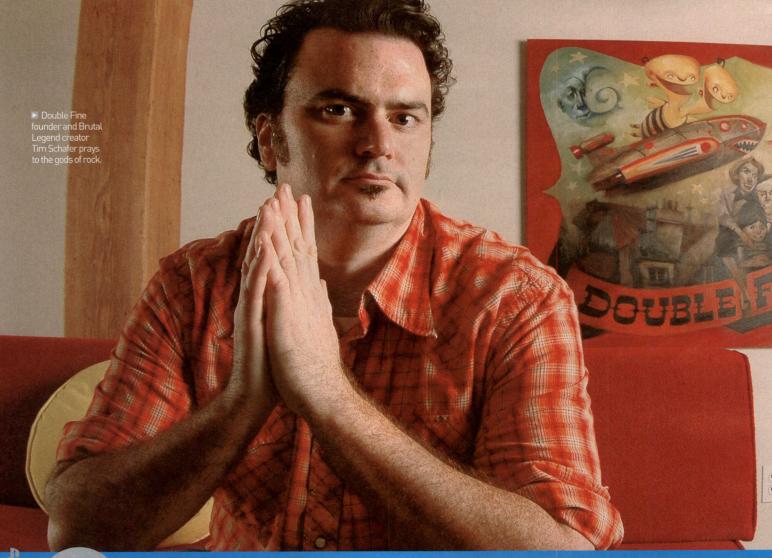
The ice is Reich

Would Wirkola ever have a go at a direct videogame adaptation? He answers with the enthusiasm of a

man who has seen the Silent
Hill movie and survived:
"Yeah, sure! I love videogames.
There's been a lack of good
videogame movies." And what
about making a game of his film
Dead Snow? "We had a couple of
requests from some companies in
Norway to do a videogame of Dead
Snow but nothing has materialised
yet." We've invited Wirkola to join our
undead head-popping sessions if he
gets a break from thinking of ways to
butcher his own zombies. We reckon
he'd chew us up in no time.

Dead Snow will be available everywhere from 31 August. Watch the trailer at deadsnow.com.

PlayStation. Official Magazine UK



Clown prince

Tim Schafer started out as a playtester for LucasArts while bowers vriter and programmer for the Secret Of Monkey



Tim Schafer talks Brutal Legend

"We're making a cool game - Jack Black likes it!"

It's been a rollercoaster few months for developer Tim Schafer and Brutal Legend, the game he's been dreaming up since his days as a teenage heavy metal fan. For most of this year a bitter legal battle has raged between the game's former publisher Activision - who dropped it during the company's merger with Vivendi Games - and new publisher EA, until the pair finally settled out of court, ending the controversy, in early August. That means the game will now hit its '16 Rocktober' release date, although Schafer himself was unflustered by the drama, telling us days before the settlement: "I don't see it as a serious threat. It's not going to stop the game coming out."

He was right. Which is a good job considering this has been a dream project for Schafer, stemming from long before he made his name with unconventional gaming concepts like Psychonauts. "I had it in my head for a while: the idea of a heavy metal roadie going back to a medieval time, using hot rods in combat," he says. "It was a lot of loose ideas floating around."

Star power

Some 15 years after dreaming up the name Brutal Legend, those ideas have finally formed a real game - and the chance to get to know his idols has fulfilled another childhood dream. "We got people I wanted to meet when I was 14, like Ozzy Osbourne the first album I bought was Diary Of A Madman," he says. "And so much of my teenage years were spent listening to Judas Priest, so we got Rob Halford. And Lemmy from Motörhead, and Lita Ford, the queen

of heavy metal." Anyone else? "You've got to save something for Brutal 2!"

Let's not forget Tim Curry and the game's star, Jack Black. "We heard he [Jack] liked Psychonauts and we thought, 'this is our chance!' I set up a meeting and he said he'd do it right there. We were like, 'We're making a cool game - Jack Black likes it!"

He shouldn't have been surprised though. Schafer has a history of cult games adored by fans, like The Secret Of Monkey Island and Grim Fandango. So we couldn't interview him without asking about Monkey Island coming to PSN - but he wasn't giving anything away: "I can't tell you." Sounds like a definite maybe to us. In the meantime, forget Guybrush Threepwood and look forward to Rocktober.

Find out more about Activision and EA's legal battle for Brutal Legend here: snipurl.com/pbhzl.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about





Coming soon to PlayStation Network







Video Store launches later this year

Your PlayStation has already brought you games, Blu-ray films, and VidZone. Now it wants to bring all the latest films straight to your hard drive. Whether your console of choice is PS3 or PSP (or even both), you'll soon be able to watch standard-def and HD films without having to move from your favourite chair.

Sony has just announced its Video Store, which will launch in the UK later this year. Hundreds of films will be available for your PS3 and PSP,

including massive blockbusters like Angels & Demons, Crank 2, Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen, and this summer's mega hit, Terminator Salvation. You can either rent your chosen film, which will be stored on your hard drive for a limited time, or pay slightly more to buy it and have it on your PS3 forever.

Movie night

Imagine it: never walking to the shops again, never even having to open your

laptop when you fancy downloading a film. Fine, we might make the odd ill-advised purchase -"I downloaded that new Meryl Streep film for you... now please come back home?" - but the best Hollywood has to offer at the tap of a joypad can only be a good thing. So cancel your visit to your mum's this Christmas. Come Boxing Day it's just going to be you, your PS3, and a bucket of popcorn.

Get access to the PlayStation Store online with Sony's official MediaGo download at snipurl.com/pqp6j.

facebook.com/dirt2game

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

Will motion control kill joypads?

OPM's DualShock duellists argue over Sony's new tech

Don't get me wrong, I love my DualShock 3 like a small, plastic child. But we can't ignore the facts. The majority of people out there don't care about the ergonomic placement of the analogue sticks or the delicate rumble that comes from its dark heart, they want something they can pretend is a tennis racket at Christmas. They will never pick up a joypad, unless the battery in their Blu-ray remote runs out and they need to replay a scene during Wall-E. The new peripheral will replace joypads for these people.

Smart casual

And that's okay. We need to accept that casual gamers and their gun-free, family-friendly titles are coming our way. We may as well embrace them and join in with a bit of virtual sword fighting. While mentioning its very name seems like some sort of blasphemy on these hallowed pages, it's not done the Wii any harm, has it? And Sony has



courted the casual gamer before. SingStar has saved many a party from Twigletscented sadness, Buzz! is a brilliant way to use your normally useless knowledge of Welsh coastal towns, and this peripheral will join the casual gaming army and lead it to victory. The joypad will remain a sacred symbol for the serious gamer; for everyone else it'll be stuck in a box under the bed. gathering dust with the old phone chargers, listening to its owners happily shooting down skeletons with a bit of pretend archery. It's a sad story, but if Darwin taught us anything, it's that evolution's a bitch.

Think you're ready to hand over your DualShock? Text MOTION YES to 87474



It's great doing these debates when you know you're right. Of course motion control work replace the pad. Think about it for a second: can you imagine playing Modern Warfare 3 via the medium of frantic arm waving? Thought not. It's hard to feel like a bad-ass soldier while flailing around the living room like you're running a marathon in clown shoes. And on fire.

First wave

I'm not in any way against motion control. In the right place it's brilliant fun, but 'the right place' isn't everywhere. The recent E3 demos showed off some great ideas – waving a sword, firing a bow and arrow, pointing a gun. It all looked amazing and I can't

wait to try it – it'll add an incredible level of immersion to some games. But it won't replace the joypad. Some things need buttons. They require the precision, subtlety and options you can only get on a DualShock. Look at Batman: Arkham Asylum, for example. The wealth of combat, stealth, gargels and acrobatics would never work with you waving at the screen like a drunk Punch and Judy.

Games that use motion control will be hugely successful but they'll be specially designed to play to the strengths of the method's unique features. Just as pad games will play to their strengths. Besides, we already know what happens when you try to make a motion control only console. That dusty white box in the corner of everyone's living room? It's called a Wii. Next time you see one, ask the owners when they last played it.

Agree that motion control could never replace the DualShock? Text MOTION NO to 87474.

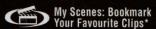


The humble joypad. Could it really be cast aside and forgotten forever

THE PERFECT HIGH DEFINITION EXPERIENCE













HANNIBAL

REDDRAGON



Out to Own on Blu-ray 7th 5EPT

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Content may not be available on all titles

hmv.com

LIVE IT.





Gamer vision

Three chances to try 3D



Split Second

We've heard a rumour that Disney's new racing game will feature a stereoscopic 3D mode. Those glasses are starting to look more tempting now, right?



Avatar

James Cameron has been pioneering 3D techniques ever since Titanic, so expect to see amazing things when this sci-fi shooter is released in December.



G-Force

The budget option uses the old-school coloured lenses to help small Disney fans get up close and personal with the James Bond style guinea pigs.

3D is officially in. The major film studios are all releasing titles in the format, and James Cameron's soon-to-be-completed 3D sci-fi movie Avatar is expected to be the most expensive film ever made. Plus the PS3 game being made to accompany the film is looking like it's going to be something special (more on this next month). But is it going to change the way we play games for good?

Cameron is clear on the matter: "I think it's going to be huge." Given that he has overseen millions of dollars being spent on developing new 3D techniques, that viewpoint is hardly surprising. But what about that of a man who has already released a 3D game on PS3?

Step forward Andrew Oliver, CTO of Blitz Games Studios. His company recently teamed up with Namco Bandai to bring Invincible Tiger: The Legend Of Han Tao to PSN. It looks like your standard, retro kung fu platformer, but switch to its 3D mode and enemies appear to fly out of the screen towards you. It's undoubtedly impressive, so we're listening when Oliver tells us that 3D is here to stay for three very simple reasons: "It has more immersion, more reality and [gives players] a greater connection to their game world."

A confident claim, but won't getting 3D up and running at home be a hassle? Oliver insists not, pointing out that many TVs already have the necessary tech built in. All you need is an HDMI connection and a pair of 3D glasses (cool, sunglasses-style, not the '80s red/blue paper disasters). He says he's heard from the big home entertainment brands, who are apparently planning to unveil their own 3D compatible machines at CES, the E3 of consumer electronics, next

year: "TV manufacturers are firmly behind 3D as the next format."

All sounds pretty exciting. But if it's so simple, why hasn't 3D caught on before – and what's the biggest threat to it now? The biggest issue is finance. Money's never been tighter in the games industry, and Oliver admits the cost to developers to integrate 3D could be as much as 15% more per game, with no guarantee their target audience will ever use it. And even if consumers have a compatible TV, they'll have to shell out around £50 on the glasses.

Mark Rein, vice president at Epic, which produces the prolific Unreal Engine, is blunt with his thoughts on a stereoscopic (3D) title. "That's dumb. 3D technology has been around for a while – we've been supporting it for ten years already." Openly disagreeing with Oliver, Rein's chief criticism is the tech: "Unreal works fine on stereoscopic, it's just you've got to change your screens to use it – that's a big accessory."

Spec savers

3D still has a fighting chance. Prices for the glasses will drop as the user base widens, and you only need to look to the cinemas for proof that people are willing to pay a little bit more to see movies, such as Ice Age 3, in 3D. The release of the Avatar film in December will drive interest in the game and the 3D tech, which could be enough to start a revolution among developers. As Cameron says: "If the game's successful and other people try to emulate it, then stereo game development will become a major thing." Hell, if the man can make billions from drowning Leonardo DiCaprio, he can surely make the world fall in love with 3D.

RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

Sony has
trademarked
'PS Rewards' –
possibly with a
view to launching
a PS3 loyalty
scheme,



Swedish rockers
Opeth have let
slip that their music
will be featured in a
2010 Saints Row
title... on PSP.



Sci-fi horror gorefest
Dead Space isn't
just getting its
own movie, it's
getting two game
sequels, 'Episodes
2 and 3'.

Calling all RPG fans! Persona 5 is coming to PS3 next year.

User-created content on the go? PS3's Modnation Racers will also be coming to PSP.



Ready to sit through that cut-scene again? Konami is hard at work on a Trophies patch for the epic Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots.







* Alien technology

Canadian cosplayer builds her own Chimera accessory

"I think some people are more surprised that I'm a girl gamer in general, let alone making weapons." So says Izy Cheung, the creator of this replica marksman rifle from Resistance 2. "I find it a little amusing that people are excited over a gun... when they don't even know that I'm making a whole Chimera costume."

That's right, to go with the expertly crafted gun (which is made from black craft foam and a whole lot of glue) she's also working on a full bodysuit. Don't look surprised - Cheung is something of a cosplay genius, even going so far as to

create a full Amaterasu costume (you know, the big, beautiful white wolf from Okami) out of fur. You can see it by heading to snipurl.com/pajq9.

She's delighted with the way the weapon has turned out, especially because it was a challenge to build: "As far as guns go, I love them, but I suck at the whole symmetrical thing." And the feedback from Resistance fans across the globe has been a pleasant surprise. "I was just blown away," she says. "I was literally almost in tears because I was so grateful and happy that my gun got that

kind of unexpected reaction. I didn't think people would care so much about one little costume prop."

Cheung is currently helping out at the family restaurant in Calgary, Alberta, and planning where she wants to go to uni, which leaves plenty of time to plan her next project. As well as the full chimera costume, she wants to make the Tigress from Kung Fu Panda and the Hellhound from The Chronicles Of Riddick. "After my Amaterasu fur suit costume, I figured I can't go back to doing little boring costumes. It's go big... or go home!

■ Keep up with Cheung and her Chimera costume online at hyoken seisou.ca.



Creator Cheung used photos of the game for reference.



■ Every detail has been recreated, with OCD accuracy.



Put away that wallet! Cheung doesn't plan to sell.



Remixing gaming's greatest hits

Welcome to Overclocked Remix (ocremix.org), the home of videogame music on the net. "Basically, we're an online community of people who love videogames and their music, including some who express that appreciation by making their own remixes or arrangements of game soundtracks," says David Lloyd, founder and president of the site.

And it really does feature everything, from Metal Gear Solid to Barbie Super Model. "We've got over 1,700 such mixes, all freely available, from retro to modern games, in all sorts of musical styles – jazz, rock, funk, classical, techno, metal, you name it!"

says Lloyd. The site even has industry fans. "Along with a whole bunch of game composers, we've got several fans and well-wishers within Sony, Capcom, Sega, Atlus, Rare, Konami, LucasArts, Firaxis and EA, among others," Lloyd tells us. "Capcom reached out to us to create the soundtrack for Super Street Fighter II Turbo HD Remix."

Ocremix.org has just released its latest project, a massive tribute to the soundtrack of Final Fantasy IV. The project took 33 contributors and has resulted in an epic three-hour album. And best of all, it's free to download at ff4.ocremix.org.

WHO SAID THAT? VIP quotes



Of course **Megan Fox** loves
"anything Mortal
Kombat". She's
perfect in every
possible way.



"At least we will know
we ruined
the property
ourselves."
Rockstar's **Dan Houser**on why he
wants to be in
charge of any
GTA film.

"He plans to do more 're-winning' of [his children's] interests as he watches the boys' favourite TV shows and plays computer games." The Mirror spills **Gordon Brown**'s holiday plans.

OPM HOT TOPIC

Are micro transactions a good thing?





Patrick Fortier
Creative director,
A2M

"I think micro transactions are great as long as they add real value to a product. I don't like the idea of paying for features that should be included in a game by default."



Richard Jones
Lead games designer
Rehelling

"Good, as they're the way forward for the industry. Bad, as certain publishers/devs are abusing them by charging too much for really poor DLC."



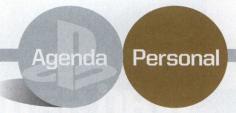
Nick Baynes
Game director,
Black Rock Studio

"If they're not an essential part of the game, good – as long as the player has the choice. If you need them to get the full enjoyment, then that's bad."



David Brickley Executive producer,

"I think that if the public are convinced they aren't simply paying for something that should have come in the box, then they're a good thing."





Wanna fight?

Nathan Ditum explains his need to win everything, all the time

Hello, everybody. My name is Nathan, and I'm idiotically competitive [*supportive applause*]. Thank you. I've got something I'd like to share with the group today.

It's hard to say when all this started. I've always hated losing, but it's not just that – I hate winning, too, when the other person isn't trying properly. I used to scream at my older brother for not trying his hardest when we played NHL on the Mega Drive. "IT DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING IF YOU'RE NOT TRYING". I love *competing*, really. And then winning.

Recently I've made a conscious effort to loosen up. There have always been bad times – like when I ran out of a party as a 16-year-old having lost a particularly tight race of Mario Kart, leaving behind a girl I fancied massively, or when we had to stop playing Buzz! in the office following The Incident – but it's since my son Jay started playing games I've really turned a corner. Smashing up a crying five-year-old at FIFA isn't as much fun as it sounds, and once

playing Tekken a tiny trigger went off in my brain and I wanted to destroy him. Smiling like a crocodile, I asked if I could join in. He was playing as Law – my preferred fighter – so to size him up I chose Hwoarang, who I'm only okay with. By this point a loose plan had already formed in my fevered brain about how to crush the guy. I beat him once, then changed to Brian, trying as hard as I could to transmit a silent message: "I can beat your best character with anyone I want."





"A trigger goes off in my head and I have to destroy."

I'd started letting the goals in it opened up a door to a whole new world.

Winning point

I have the occasional setback. I fell off the wagon at a recent Tekken 6 preview event. I guess I was tempted because it's a series I've always been pretty tidy at (let's throw away any suggestion that I'm actually good at anything in any kind of significant or non-parochial sense right now). I saw a marketing guy sitting alone playing the only PS3 copy of the game they had, and sat down next to him for a fight. To the casual eye what happened next probably looked a lot like two grown men playing a few friendly games, before one of the men nodded goodnight and headed off to find himself a drink.

This isn't what really happened at all. What really happened is that when I saw the guy

his chair and switched to Jin, a desperate move which let me in for the kill. I chose Law and ruined him in two easy rounds, the unspoken f-you hanging between us – in my moronic, fist-pumping head, at least – being that I'd scored a humiliating victory by beating him with his own character. Then he left. I am not proud. (I am slightly proud.)

I guess what I'm trying to find is that balance between giving friendly competition a little edge, and, you know, deliberately playing a man I don't know out of his chair for no reason. Most of all I don't want my kids to grow up the same way I did, desperate to prove themselves to nobody in particular by winning everything they try. Which, given the fact my now seven-year-old boy invariably beats me at FIFA no matter what I try, isn't going so well. I'll keep trying though.

Thank you all for listening.

LETTER FROM HOME

Nathan Ditum is beating people at Buzz! and going all Logan's Run

The new, fixed Buzz! space is amazing. At first I wasn't sure about it. partly because it had appeared briefly before and broken to bits, and partly because when you go inside the whole thing looks like a giant disco in Logan's Run. It's a big, dark space with four huge coloured squares on the floor. Questions (uploaded by users) and a timer appear on a board on the wall. and you answer by running to a square displaying the right response. Mostly this means getting furious with follow-the-pack cheaters (and trying to trick them by standing on the wrong square until the last second). and wishing the losers would explode in a flash of smoke. They don't, but it's still ace.





4Gamers Racing Wheel

Nothing says professional racing driver like a small rubber and chrome wheel attachment for your Sixaxis. Apart from, you know, an actual car.

Calvin Klein Sunglasses

£121



Jellio Gummi

£76 jellio.com



Want

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

BeoTime Alarm Clock

Like flutes? Like waking up?
Then you need this magic flute
alarm clock. It also works as a
remote control for all your other
expensive Bang & Olufsen
gadgets. Yeah, us neither

bang-olufsen.com

B



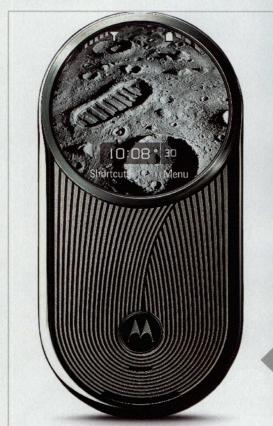
Parajet SkyCar

In your face Mr Bus Driver! This car only does 62mph on the road, but with its paraglider attachment it can fly. Yes, fly— up to 8,000 feet off the ground.

£50,000



£1,750



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press



Sony Cyber-shot Digital Camera SC-HX1

Flatter your skills and your subject



£489

sonystyle.co.uk

In a nutshell

The robustly old-skool contours and defiant pricing of Sony's DSC-HX1 are a musky, man-sized riposte to a world-gone-mad in which benefit whores and cash-strapped tweens can match Mario Testino pixel for pixel with their gaudy Pay As You Go candy bars. At 9.1MP, this digital SLR may be a furlong short of the current frontrunners. Still, as real photographers (and Sony boffins) understand, playing the megapixel numbers game is for chumps. It's the physical size of the sensor, the quality of the imaging processor and lens that sorts the men from the boys. Measured by these criteria, the DSC-HX1 is the Hemingway of Satan's light boxes.

What's so special?

While this is the kind of camera that looks best gripped by the hairy fist of a war correspondent, bouncing around the back of a Kabul-bound Toyota Hilux, the DSC-HX1's shiny guts are all about consistently delivering you photographic glory with minimal effort. With shooting modes that include Advanced Sports, Twilight Portrait, Beach, Snow, Fireworks, and Gourmet, there's a good chance your lifestyle isn't nearly exciting enough to merit ownership. But don't worry, thanks to an impressive 20x optical zoom, you'll be able to scrutinise your and everyone else's shortcomings in unflinching detail.

Tell me more

It's almost easier to list what the DSC-HX1 doesn't do. Not only can it detect up to eight faces in a frame and focus accordingly, it can even tell when they're smiling and trigger the shutter for you. But while we're probably only a firmware upgrade away from an option to instantly excise traitorous exes out of bittersweet group shots, for now at least, you'll have to do the tearing yourself.





The facts

- 114.5mm x 82.8mm x 91.8mm
- 504g with battery and Memory Stick media
- 3-inch Clear Photo LCD Plus
- Sony G-Lens: 28-560mm
 Imaging Device: 7.63mm Exmor CMOS Sensor
 BIONZ™ Real Imaging
- Processor[™] Technology
- Megapixels: 9.1MP
- 20x optical zoom
- Battery Capacity: Approx 195 minutes/390 images





PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up **▼** Down **●** Non mover **+** New entry

PS3

- 1 Ashes Cricket 2009
- 2 V Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood
- 3 V Fight Night Round 4
- 4 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10
- 5 inFamous
- 6 A Prototype
- 7 V Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare
- 8 V UFC 2009: Undisputed
- 9 🔺 Red Faction: Guerrilla
- 10 V Ghostbusters

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen
- 2 Harry Potter & THBP
- **3** A G-Force
- 4 V Call Of Duty: World At War
- 5 V Ben 10 Alien Force
- 6 V Need For Speed Undercover
- 7 A Ghostbusters
- B 🔻 Ice Age 3 DOTD
- 9 Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings
- 10 A Persona 4

Source chart-track.co.uk

PSP

- 1 Monster Hunter Freedom Unite
- 2 FIFA 09
- 3 Harry Potter & THBP
- 4 Resistance Retribution
- 5 A Need For Speed Undercover
- 6 Football Manager 2009
- 7 V Transformers: ROTF
- 8 Ben 10 Alien Force
- 9 A G-Force
- 10 🔺 Lego Batman

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

SEP 01

Issue 36 on sale It's the pretty papery thing you're holding in your hands right now. Read it, then



Is the red-headed songstress of La Roux *reall*y bulletproof? She'll certainly shoot one at

your heart when they play London's Scala. **Jaroux.co.uk**

10

17

24

Game on got that massive bloke from 300 in it. New movie Gamer is in cinemas today.

04

11

18

Becks sources
Out today: Whiteou
a film about a US
marshal tracking a
killer in Antarctica.
which means Kate
Beckinsale in fur. Ye
adventureland

Green light

driving game on PS3. shift.needforspeed.co



Win an HDTV

Love a man in a toga? Celebrate Gladiator's Blu-ray debut by getting your hands on a big shiny TV (see opposite page)

14





Japanese We'll be at the Tokyo Game Show

harassing cosplayers and fighting for game news. Follow the opm_uk Twitter feed

To the overpriced steering wheel peripheral! Need For Speed Shift joins the race to be the best



Frakkin' great
Nothing planned for
two months? Why
not splash out on
Battlestar Galactica
- The Complete
Series on Blu-ray.
www.scifi.com/



29 Sep Issue 37 on sale - subscribe now on page 52

30





04

Stevie winward

England pair Gerro Sports 1 and HD1.



Are you not entertained?

Win an HDTV and Gladiator on Blu-ray

Hang onto your toga, because this month sees the Blu-ray release of the highly acclaimed manly masterpiece Gladiator, courtesy of Universal Pictures. And what better way to enjoy the sweat, blood and bonus content than on a brand new Toshiba LCD TV? Well, to celebrate this epic event, we've teamed up with Universal Pictures to offer one lucky reader a Toshiba HD Ready LCD TV and a copy of the film. To be in with a chance, just answer this question:

In Gladiator, who plays the role of Commodus?

A OLIVER REED BRUSSELL CROWE C JOAQUIN PHOENIX

Text using the word 'Rome' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474. Alternatively, you can enter at future comps.co. uk/opm36. The winner will be picked at random from all the correct entries. Closing date: 29 September 2009.

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MINUTE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking



Upgrade complete

Want the game to load? graphics... everything in this shooter is an upgrade. Snipurl.com/nf7di



Bunni: How We First Met

This oh-so-cute game society sim. Build mines, trip for six-year-olds bunnibunni.com



Clinic Escape

everybody needs. Cooking, One Flew Over The snipurl.com/nqcko



FIVE YEARS AGO IN

This month we visit **OPS2 #51**

exclusive review of Killzone. We'd since PS2 launched," we said, 9/10.



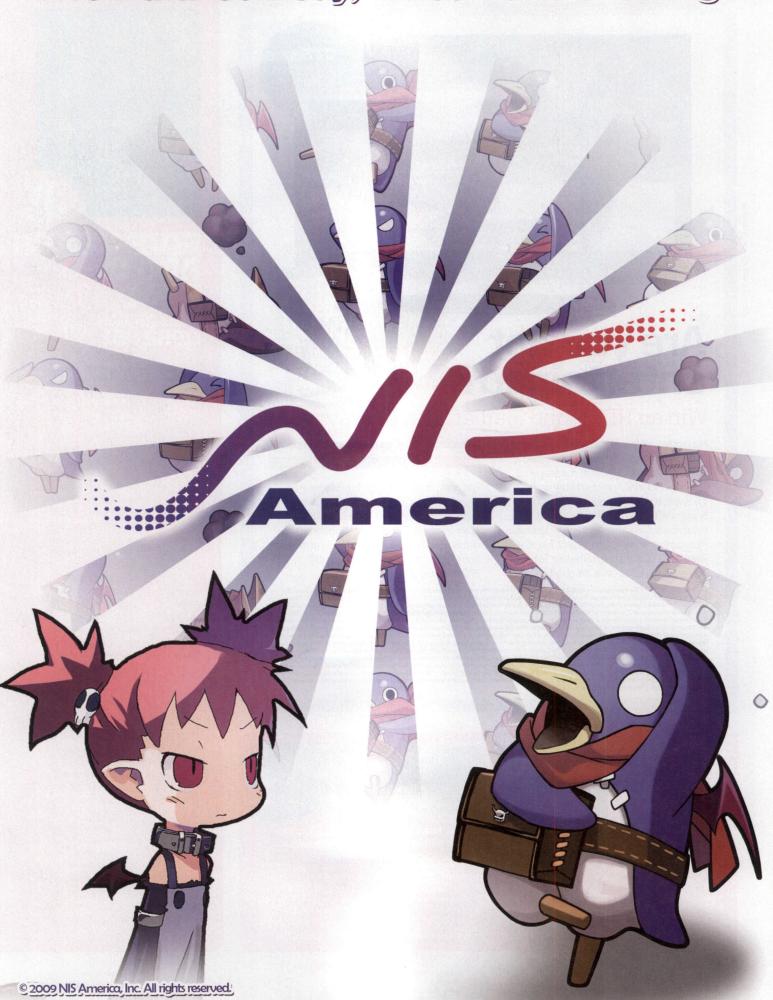
A hands on with **PES4** drew big GTA: San Andreas ("The most excited The Getaway: Black Monday ("The

Timesplitters Future Perfect (which

Reviews kicked off with Burnout 3: Takedown, which trumped even our cover game with a 10/10. "The best month - Colin McRae Rally 2005 modder Juiced got 7/10. Not having a good month, though, was McFarlane's Evil Prophecy: "Just be thankful we've



"Two Parts Comedy, Three Parts Challenge!"

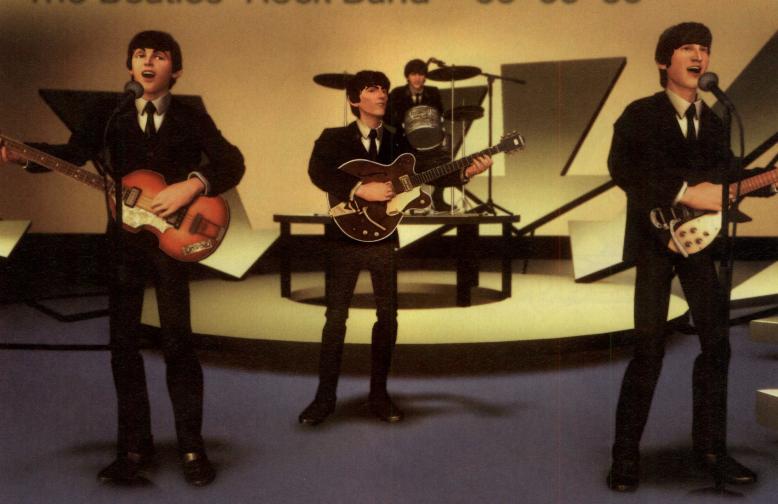






all you need is...

The Beatles™ Rock Band™ - 09 · 09 · 09

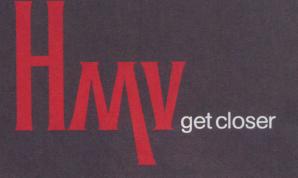




hmy exclusive pre-order offer pre-order The Beatles Rock Band™ and receive 3 free game songs*

£39.99**

works with all ROCKBAND and Chitag PS3 controllers, and singstar microphones



also available 09·09·09 BEATLES remastered

*Code is valid from 1st October 2009, Codes will be emailed to customers upon the release of the game, customers who per-order in store will receive their code when they purchase their copy of the game, Offer not valid on Ninistando Wii, Pre-order offer ends 11.59pm 08/09/09. Code for receive their code when they purchase their copy of the game, Offer not valid on Ninistando Wii, Pre-order offer ends 11.59pm 08/09/09. Code for receive their code when they purchase the code of the c

"Look what followed me home, mum. Can we keep him? I've called him Seepy. No, I haven't seen dad for ages. Not since that screaming in the garden."

PlayStation Official Magazine - UK

EW5

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

ometimes with previews, it feels like we've thrown a party and we're waiting for the doorbell to ring. Some months it hits nine o'clock and it's just you and, say, Darksiders making awkward conversation while you wait for the others to arrive. Other months - like this one there's a bang at the door and so many great games turn up at once you don't know which one to talk to first.

There are plenty of A-list guests this issue. Like Rage, which is looking like Fallout 3 after a Hollywood makeover - apocalyptic, shooty but super pretty with it. Plus it's got cars to race, too. We also loved Alpha Protocol's swish RPG spy action. It's a little plain to look at but if you want to debate the merits of a +1silencer against upgraded bulletproof vests as much as you want to clean out terrorist cells, this is your game.

And finally, we played DJ Hero. It's every bit as tactile and addictive as Guitar Hero, and with a great track list. It's definitely invited to our next party.



DJ HERO

As far as we can tell from our hands on, we can definitely rock a medium difficulty party. Expert mode hurts our brains – but then, we're scared of the orange button in Guitar Hero.



FINAL FANTASY XIII

New screens, new characters, new weapons and new monsters – like the Cie Corpse above. This is the place to find out about the biggest RPG going.



ASSASSIN'S CREED II Creative director Patrice Désilets told us there'd be more mission variety in this stabby sequel. We said, "We'll believe that when we see it." Now we have... and we're so sold.



Can't wait?
Play these



Fallout 3 (PS3, Bethesda) A biend of RPG and shooter where you explore a ruined world ravaged by nuclear war in search of your missing father.



Wolfenstein 3D

IPSN, Activision I One of id's first games and arguably the father of the modern FPS. Painfully retro but an essential slice of history asyou battle mutant nazis and a robo-Hitler! t's always the way. You plan for the apocalypse – sinking special pods (called Arks) into the ground to survive an asteroid strike – only to have an earthquake ruin everything. Instead of emerging to establish a brave new world, you stagger out 80 years later to find wastelands, mutants and mankind scavenging to survive.

The setup might sound familiar, but this looks astonishing – beautiful ramshackle towns, detailed characters and potentially huge depth to the range of shooting, racing and exploring as you make your way through a massive open world. As you wander you'll meet people who'll offer you missions like clearing out raider settlements or delivering messages. You'll also start to hear of a shadowy group called the Authority, whose sinister interest in Arks is key to the

story. (Early on you're told to ditch your Ark uniform so the Authority "don't come sniffing around".) Travel further and deserts and tin shacks give way to abandoned cities and neon-flooded subway outposts, while crashed airliners in the sand or beached ocean liners in dry seas act as constant reminders of the past.

Weapons ready

Fortunately you can protect yourself with an array of guns and special weapons like crossbows which fire projectiles that let you control enemies before blowing them up. There's also the wingstick, a lethal three-pointed boomerang. And depending on your tactics you can build gadgets – autoturrets and robo-bodyguards, for example. Providing you have the parts and plans, of course.

The huge open world also means cars are crucial; for transport or to compete in time trials and races where you can earn weapons or add-ons like battering rams and tire shredders. You can also tweak suspension, traction and acceleration to get your death-wagon just how you like it. Races aren't the only events. There are also things like the gladiatorial Mutant Bash TV where you fight creatures in arenas to please the crowd and win cash. There are hazards like giant plastic gorillas covered in spinning blades and spikes springing from the floor, and you also get to choose your opponents - tag mutants you meet in the wasteland and they'll appear in Bash TV. Probably best not tag anything big then. Or dangerous. What about trees? Can we tag trees?











■ This is a mutant, just in case the fangs and complete lack of skin didn't give it away. Avoid.



△ PS3's ○ Wheels ⊗ Of □ Steel

emember the first time you played Guitar Hero? Those fumbling steps as you tried to read a stream of coloured dots onscreen while grabbing at the controller? This is like that all over again. But, as creative director Jamie Jackson points out, "We've been playing Guitar Hero for so long now that you forget we were all crap at it. But it's compelling, so you keep going and you pick it up."

He's right, because we soon master the basics. There are three buttons on the deck that cover three music 'streams' [from left to right]: record one, sampler and record two. Each track is a mix of two songs – combinations like Marvin Gaye's I Heard It Through The Grapevine with Gorillaz's Feel Good Inc, or Jay Z's Izzo vs Jackson Five's I Want You Back. Playing involves tapping buttons to trigger sounds or holding them down to scratch. Depending on how the streams move left and right on-screen you also need to move the crossfader, cutting between tracks or playing them together.

Mix master

Sounds complicated? Don't worry, it has the same instantly rewarding connection

between the music and your actions as Guitar Hero. And the combination of vinyl manipulation and fader flicks match real DJing exactly.

We also tried a guitar vs DJ track, a mash-up between the Beastie Boys' Sabotage on the deck and Foo Fighters' Monkey Wrench on the axe. The mix felt a bit busy – the frantic guitar riffs and beats competing for space – but it worked. Hopefully, the other combinations are more balanced because it should make a great multiplayer mode alongside the deck vs deck options. Consider us sold on the concept and ready for more.



▲ The controller has changed but the Guitar Hero roots are obvious.



Could Be A Contender

Hellion: Mystery Of The Inquisition



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

You're Godric of Glastonbury, a Holy Catholic knight who travels Europe battling evil.

The reality

It's a first-person swords 'n' sorcery adventure as you fight heretics and demons during the dark ages.

The hook

You're a member of the Inquisition, following a 'hack first, ask questions later' style of religious persecution.

The inspiration

Ye olde world fantasy: most of the dev team worked on similarly themed The Witcher.

The chances

No way to tell yet as it's the dev team's first game. The sinister tone sounds promising though.

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub TBC Dev Flying Fish Works



On The Box Judged by their covers



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

An online test of endurance as various players cling on to cold steel objects in perilous locations. Last one to let go (or, god-forbid, stop playing) wins.

Format PS3ETA 23 Oct Pub Sony



Eyepet

Translation game in which you must prevent initially well-spoken furry animals from adopting a northern accent. Aye Pet' mini-games include 'Why Eye', 'Eeeb Eye Gum' and 'Eye Lass' Format PS3 ETA Sep Pub Sony



Marvel Super Hero Squad

Flying game. Save the worldfrom evil while keeping a minimum of three limbs outstretched infront of you. Two limbs or less and Satan wins your soul.

Format PSP ETA Oct Pub THO

Preview



Sub-machine guns are deadly up close.



Use stealth to outwit the men with guns.



Perks provide new combat abilities.



Level up martial arts and ditch the guns.



Turn flashbangs into incendiary bombs.



'Soldier' class characters suit big guns.



Accuracy depends on stance and abilities.



Meet contacts to gather sensitive intel.



There are plenty of lady spies to chat up.



Stealth kills are a lethal, silent ability.



Snipers fight from a safe distance.





Pick your gear carefully for a mission.



Blind fire protects you but it's inaccurate.



A well-placed booby trap rocks.

Quick pitch

Black ops

You're an Alpha Protocol agent, a super-secret spy the government can deny if discovered.

The specialist

It's an action game with an RPG system to upgrade and develop a range of talents from gung-ho soldier to invisible spook.

Custom job

Bolt add-ons to weapons to increase accuracy and damage.

Original Concept Format PS3 ETA 9 October Pub Sega Dev Obsidian Entertainment

Alpha Protoco △ Level ○ Up ⊗ Your □ Spy







ne problem with RPGs is that unless you really buy into a world full of rubber-faced monsters waving axes, it's hard to relate to any of it. We're by no means saying they're bad, just a bit niche. This stat-tweaking, XP-popping spy shooter is anything but, with action, guns, gadgets and sexy ladies everyone can relate to that, right?

Killing machine

Initially, it plays like any third-person adventure. You can stick to walls during shootouts, sneak around snapping necks and fill your boots with an array of weaponry that's got so many techy extras bolted on it's practically self-aware. There are rifle stocks to reduce recoil, extended magazines, silencers, sights - if you

have any preference for how to put bullets into people, it's covered here.

The real fun comes from the skills you develop. This is an RPG remember. As you kill enemies, hack terminals and pick locks, you collect XP which can be used to build your character. Skills are either passive (always on) like stealth, or active (must be turned on) like a gun autolock that zeros in instantly on enemies, or a 'sense' ability that locates nearby threats. From what we've seen there's huge potential and our hour of play only left us wanting longer to perfect our silenced pistol carrying, lock-picking ghost.

☐ The bra/light machine gun combo might not be practical, but it'll sure get you noticed.





benefits from being nice or mean to people. It depends on how you treat characters. You can kill or ally with just about any character and that will have an impact. It's ambiguous. The thing you might think was good could have harsh repercussions." Programming producer, Obsidian





Classic Series Format PS3 ETA September Pub Activision Dev Neversoft

Guitar Hero 5

△ Guitar ○ Bass ⊗ Drums □ Flute?

e love Guitar Hero. It's as essential to our parties as cheap beer and apologies to the neighbours. That said, playing the fifth in the series brings a creeping sense of familiarity. It's entering SingStar territory – here's another version of a game we've played solidly for years. It's hard to get excited about a bit of polish to the already mirror-like

Stage presence

sheen of its gameplay.

The new mo-capped animation and lighting effects are looking smart, though. There are some good ideas too, like a party play mode that lets any combination of one to four players and instruments drop in and out freely. Some of the new competitive Rockfest

modes are also looking strong. There's Momentum, which raises or lowers your difficultly level, and therefore your score, depending on how well you

play, and Elimination, where the lowest scoring player gets

cut each round. And in Streaker, you have to play sections perfectly to rack up multipliers.

Ultimately, success hangs on the track list, and it contains some odd choices. Coldplay's In My Place doesn't fit the rock vibe, and playing the flute

section from Vampire Weekend's A-Punk on the guitar is *definitely* pushing it. But there are 85 tracks on the way, everything from TV On The Radio's Wolf Like Me, to Iron Maiden's Two Minutes To Midnight. So, all back to ours, yeah? Cool. The address is...



The Beatles: Rock Band (PS3,EA) It might be limited to just





Band Hero (PS3, Activision) Aimed at a family audience, Guitar Hero's younger in the maje act



Rock Band (PS3, EA) Despite the plastic b

(PS3, EA)
Despite the plastic brick
WTF? makeover, there's
a strong track list and
it's just too cute.



Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves

Modern Warfare 2



"I'm still playing Call Of Duty 4
- I didn't play the other one
[World At War] because I'm a
bit Second World Warred out.
Two things in particular I
loved in the original Modern
Warfare. The first was using
the night vision with the
infrared sights for the first
time, and the second was
fighting through the plane at
the end. So I can't wait to see
what they do next."

God Of War III

"Really simple this one: I'm into that type of game, I loved the previous ones, and the new one looks really good!"

NHL 10

"Living in Vancouver you don't have much choice other than to get into ice hockey. The NHL boys have done an amazing job of creating the sensation that you're playing for real. There's depth through simple things, like giving players consistent momentum and not making them do things you wouldn't a see a man do in real life."



PlayStation Icon Format PS3 ETA March 2010 Pub Square Enix Dev Square Enix

Final Fantasy XIII

hat rosy-cheeked urchin to the right is Hope Estheim, the latest addition to Final Fantasy XIII's cast. He's the latest member of Team Nora, which takes its name from the Japanese word 'norainu' meaning stray dog. It probably loses something in translation. They're the group, led by the previously revealed trench coat-wearing Snow, who are fighting against the government of Cocoon, a happy-clappy techno city that drifts above the wild planet of Pulse.

Early start

If you think he looks a little fresh-faced to be fighting monsters it's because... he is. A 14-year-old orphan who joins Team Nora after his mother dies, Hope is secretly planning to avenge her death which he blames on Snow. In combat he uses a boomerang, but not just any bent come-back stick – he's got future boomerangs that target enemies and chain together multiple hits. The downside? His inexperience means he can be pressured into running off mid-fight, although he'll get tougher as he gains experience.

There's new info on Vanille, previously code named 'pigtailed girl', too. She's an exile from Cocoon who's best at ranged combat, fighting with magic and a sort of combat fishing rod which fires out needles on wires.

It's also been revealed that most of Team Nora – Snow, Vanille, Sazh and Hope – become l'Cie; someone chosen by the god-like fal'Cie to perform a task, or 'focus'. Only Lightning's focus has been revealed, which is to "bring the end of the world", although what that means exactly is still unclear.

One of the pros to being a l'Cie is a crystal mark which is the source of each character's Summon, a magical entity that can be used during battle. Lightning, for example, can call Odin, a huge sword-waving knight. It's not all good, though. The l'Cie are seen as bad omens and those marked are shunned by other people. Plus failure to complete your focus means becoming a Cie Corpse, a clawed, crystalline monster consumed by eternal despair. As motivational techniques go, it's got a kick to it.



Quick pitch

The chosen one

You play as Lightning, who's been selected to destroy the naive, utopian city of Cocoon.

Techno war

Unlike past Final Fantasies, this is a futuristic world with robots and gadgets.

Two worlds

The game's story takes place in Cocoon, and on the feral planet Pulse.







and apparently it's your fault. So skip forward a few hundred years, when War is stripped of his

place up), it's started prematurely,

each other. There are puzzles too, with Zelda boasted as a key influence, although the focus so far seems to be on soul-harvesting hack work. An intriguing and meaty mix, then.



sic Series Format PS3 ETA Autumn Pub THQ Dev Rainbow Studios

MX vs ATV Reflex

△ Quads ○ Bikes ⊗ Tracks □ Tricks

There's been a glut of off-road racers on PS3, but the big difference here is that you have to move your rider's buttocks as much as the handlebars. So now you can put all that excess pizza weight to good use.

During races you use the right stick to shift your rider's weight, helping you shave time off corners and ensuring you stay on the bike when things get bumpy. At first it's a challenge to make sure your steering and leaning is

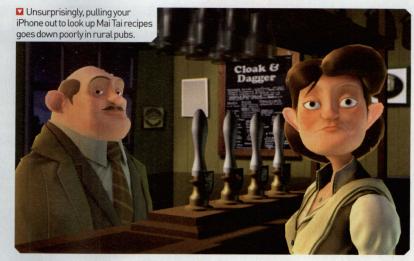
working together, but eventually things start to feel natural.

The same can't be said for the wreck avoidance indicator - a giant flashing green thing that gives you seconds to correctly shift your body. It's effective, warning you of potentially disastrous weight distribution, but having an ugly great arrow in your face every five minutes ruins the immersion. At least when you fail your broken body carves pleasing gouges out of the terrain.









PS3 Exclusive Format PSN download ETA December Pub Relentless Dev Relentless

Blue Toad Murder Files

△ And ○ The ⊗ Murderer □ Is...

therwise known as the next game from the Buzz! people, this drops the TV trivia quiz setting for a PSN murder mystery. Producer Jade Tidy explains, "There will be six episodes. There's one overall mystery, but each episode will have a whodunnit within it. You can play episodes standalone but, as with a TV series, you get a greater benefit if you play them all in order."

Each episode follows a member of the Blue Toad Detectives as they investigate a shooting in the village of Little Riddle. According to Tidy,

"You move around the village by selecting locations on the map. At each location is a character from the village, who you question to solve the crime, whether they are a suspect or a witness." You'll also be solving puzzles to get clues before being quizzed on your discoveries and then choosing a suspect. There's nothing too complex, though, says Tidy. "We're not trying to replicate CSI. The tools you'll need are what every good detective should have – observation and deduction!"

There's still a hint of Buzz! to it all, though, explains Tidy: "With each step of the

investigation a puzzle is played to help a villager, or get more clues. You'll also be questioned on events that happen and have to choose your suspect before the end of the episode."

You can even compete with

friends in up to four-player games if you want. "Most groups play the puzzles co-operatively," says Tidy, "but choose to vote for their selected suspect individually." Ironic last minute back-stabbing, then? Win.







veloper Format PS3 ETA 20 November Pub Ubisoft Dev Ubisoft Montreal

ssassin's Creed II

Can't wait? Play these



Assassin's Creed



inFamous With a superpowered this is Assassin's Creed meets the X-Men.

🛆 Poison 🔘 Enemies 🛇 Help 🗇 Friends

here's no doubt the first Assassin's Creed looked amazing. Beautiful ancient cities, stunning animation and fights that flowed like a stabby ballet. But no matter how much it flashed its come hither visuals, it only had a handful of tricks stuffed up its elegantly tailored sleeve, with repetitive missions that made every single hit feel samey. The sequel needs more variety and, by the looks of it, Ubi Montreal has found plenty of ways to freshen things up.

A slow death

Take new weapon the Poison Blade. It's a small, undetectable needle that can be fired at unsuspecting targets. Hit a victim and they won't notice a thing... until the toxin drives them mad, inducing a frenzied Berserker mode where they attack anyone around them. Then, after a few seconds of chaos, they'll die. It's basically, a) a

handy diversion for assassins that don't want to be noticed and b) great fun at dull parties.

Direct action

If you prefer going toe-to-toe with the enemy, however, you can now prepare by splashing in-game cash on armour. You'll be able to add plates to hero Ezio's shoulders, chest and legs. There's no word on whether it'll affect your ability to scamper up castle walls but there are several levels of protection that will change your appearance as you upgrade. (Plus you can visit a tailor to change costume colours.) You'll also be able to buy weapons, ammo and tools - such as smoke bombs you can use to escape.

One new trick is the ability to carry things. You can heft a few objects around - chests, dead bodies you need to hide, and even living people. One mission has you carrying Rosa, an

injured member of the thieves' guild, to safety. As with the last instalment you can still call on local factions, and jobs like this are vital to earn trust. When the robbers like you, you'll be able to hire gangs of thieves to draw guards away from targets. Another mission involves escorting travellers between cities in your horse carriage, battling attackers that try to jump on board.

The carriage also comes in handy getting about, because there's a large and varied landscape to explore. Joining Florence and Venice are the open farmlands of Tuscany and the city San Gimignano, the wetlands which hide the city of Forli and interlinking mountain regions. And when you're not travelling you can search for Secret Locations. These are hidden interiors inside famous landmarks that can only be reached by climbing challenges and puzzle solving. And, honestly, who would go to Venice and not try and see some of the sights?





Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ SingStore win

New deal with Universal means the best party game just got better.
And our combined debt is now equal to that of Switzerland.

▲ German beer

Three-man Gamescom team survives thanks to delicious, hangover-free Deustch lager. The games are good too - hit twitter.com/opm_uk to see how it went down.

▲ Modern Warfare 2

Multiplayer contains customisable kill streaks, including the chance to open fire from an AC-130 gunship. Get a move on, November.

▼Burned out

OPM's James and Nathan almost ruined by mission to finish Burnout Paradise. Rest of team amused.

▼ Duty free

Sports feature reminds us that not enough great US and Japan releases reach UK. Ryu Ga Gotoku 3 localisation would be a start.

▼ Driven mad

Dirt 2, Supercar
Challenge and Need
For Speed Shift
(review next month)
arrive on same day. Cue lively
debate (AKA swearing) over
which is best. Ends when one
clown votes Virtua Racing.



Ninja Gaiden Sigma II

A glimpse at one of the 30 online co-op challenge levels sees Ayane and Rachel taking on mobs of soldiers and giant spikey worm demons in a cavernous hall full of fleshy pillars and rivers of blood. The duo also summon a giant fiery spell together that looks like a mini nuclear explosion, to take out an evil woman in butterfly fancy dress and a thong.



The latest on...

New shots, new games, new info





Braid

Format PSN download ETA Winter Pub TBC

The brilliant platformer that lets you rewind time – think Super Mario Bros meets Sky+. Help hero Tim rescue the princess by solving puzzles and fiddling with the space/time continuum.



Dragon Ball: Raging Blast

Format PS3 ETA November Pub Namco Bandai Yes, another episode of the prolifically mediocre fight series. This time out you can smash up the environments as well as opponents, using a new Super Rising attack system.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Format PS3 ETA Autumn Pub LucasArts

New DLC incoming, following an alternate storyline where Starkiller replaces Vader. The extra missions see him battling characters like Ben Kenobi, Luke Skywalker and Boba Fett.



Metalocalypse: Dethgame

Format PS3 ETA Winter Pub Konami

Based on Adult Swim's series about a famous Norwegian death metal band called Dethklok. It's a messy comedy brawler with a grim sense of humour – you can pee on defeated enemies.



Where The Wild Things Are

Format PS3 ETA October Pub Warner Bros

Action adventure based on Spike Jonze's movie adaptation of Sendak's kids' book. Play as naughty kid Max and use your new monster chums' abilities to escape a doomed island.



The Beatles: Rock Band

Format PS3 ETA 9 September Pub EA

New songs confirmed: Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Yellow Submarine, Can't Buy Me Love, Eight Days A Week, Paperback Writer and With A Little Help From My Friends. Lovely.





Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising

Format PS3 ETA 9 October Pub Codemasters
The already ultra-realistic FPS reveals its
hardcore mode: No HUD. No crosshair. No
compass. Just a map. And probably lots of dying.



Split Second

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub Disney Interactive
Black Rock's mentalist racer has taken the sensible step of moving the trigger icons off the scenery and onto rival cars. In practice, it makes blowing stuff up all the easier. Good call, guys.



Tekken 6

Format PS3 ETA 30 Oct Pub Namco Bandai

New exclusive costumes for the PS3 version have been announced, including a fetching butterfly bra for Zafina (no anoraks then?) and flashy togs for Jin and Lars Alexandersson.



Serious Sam HD: The First Encounter

Format PSN download ETA TBC Pub TBC

The retro FPS remake will hit PSN if there's demand, says dev Croteam. So if you want to blast the hell out of aliens (you do), say so...



Castle Crashers

Format PSN download ETA 2010 Pub The Behemoth
Kidnapped princesses are so hot right now. This
four-player co-op cartoon brawler sees your
gang of knights trying to rescue royalty with the
help of magical powers and animals.



Final Fantasy XIV

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub Square Enix

MMO includes races like the cat-eared Mikotte people and the diminutive Raraferu. (No, we didn't make those names up.) There are also jobs including blacksmith, cook and – YES! – gardener.



Military Madness

Format PSN download ETA Winter Pub Hudson Soft

Live out those space commander dreams with this turn-based strategy remake. It's set on the moon in 2089, where war wages between the Allied Union forces and the alien Axis-Xenon.



Modern Warfare 2

Format PS3 ETA 10 November Pub Activision

The hottest game on the planet just got hotter, with fresh multiplayer details: new guns, new kill streak rewards, and the first of two multiplayer DLC maps confirmed – with more on the way.

Also on the way...

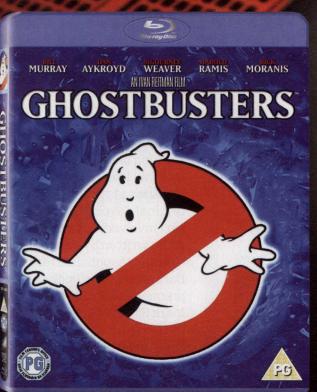
More hard game fact crammed in at the last possible minute

Activision's financial reports have revealed that new **James Bond** and **Spider-**Man games are on the way. Ubisoft's disaster survival title I Am Alive is still on, if leaked concept art is anything to go by... but it's delayed until 2010. Ubisoft also revealed Ghost Recon 4 is coming next year along with another **Endwar**, which a 'small team' in Shanghai are working on right now. Hands up if you love tentacles! The Darkness is getting a sequel. Original developer Starbreeze isn't involved, but the script is being written by Paul Jenkins, the man responsible for The Darkness' comic book preguel. According to actor Mark Sloan, Hitman 5 is on the way - he revealed he's been doing motion capture for the game at Batman dev Rocksteady Games. No word on whether the studio has taken over from creators IO. or is just overseeing the motion capture for the game. **Gran Turismo PSP** boss Kazunori Yamauchi has been discussing PSP/PS3 connectivity between the handheld version and GT5. saying that any cars you unlock in the PSP version will automatically be available in GT5. The **Prison Break** game is back on, with Deep Silver picking it up after Brash Entertainment went bust. Finally, Resident Evil 2, 3 and Dino Crisis are all hitting the US Store, although there's no word yet on a Euro release. We can but hope...

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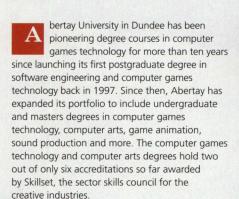
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INSIDE VIEW: CHRIS ELLINGFORD

GRADUATED WITH BA (HONS) IN COMPUTER ARTS

"The course is diverse in the sense it covered many computer packages and applications which I now use on a daily basis in my current role as a digital designer.

"The biggest appeal, and the reason why I decided to enroll, was the prospect of working with 3D computer animation. I decided my future lay within this medium and in my last year I dedicated my final project to computer animation.

"My first job was with an oil company in Aberdeen information about the post was kindly passed to me by my tutors at Abertay. I worked for three months on a 3D demobased movie of underwater apparatus; it was at this point I was approached by my current employer, the Fifth Business. One of the directors had viewed my website and was impressed with my university show reel. Six months after joining the company I was invited to join the London design team - it was a dream opportunity for me.

"What I learned and experienced at the University of Abertay has been the catalyst for everything I have achieved so far. Abertay allowed me to become comfortable working with computer applications and develop a range of skills which I use every day."



To watch Chris's film go to www.cellingford.co.uk

INDUSTRY RECOGNITION

Abertay's key partners from across interactive and digital media sectors include:

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Dare to be Digital

Daring you to be the best

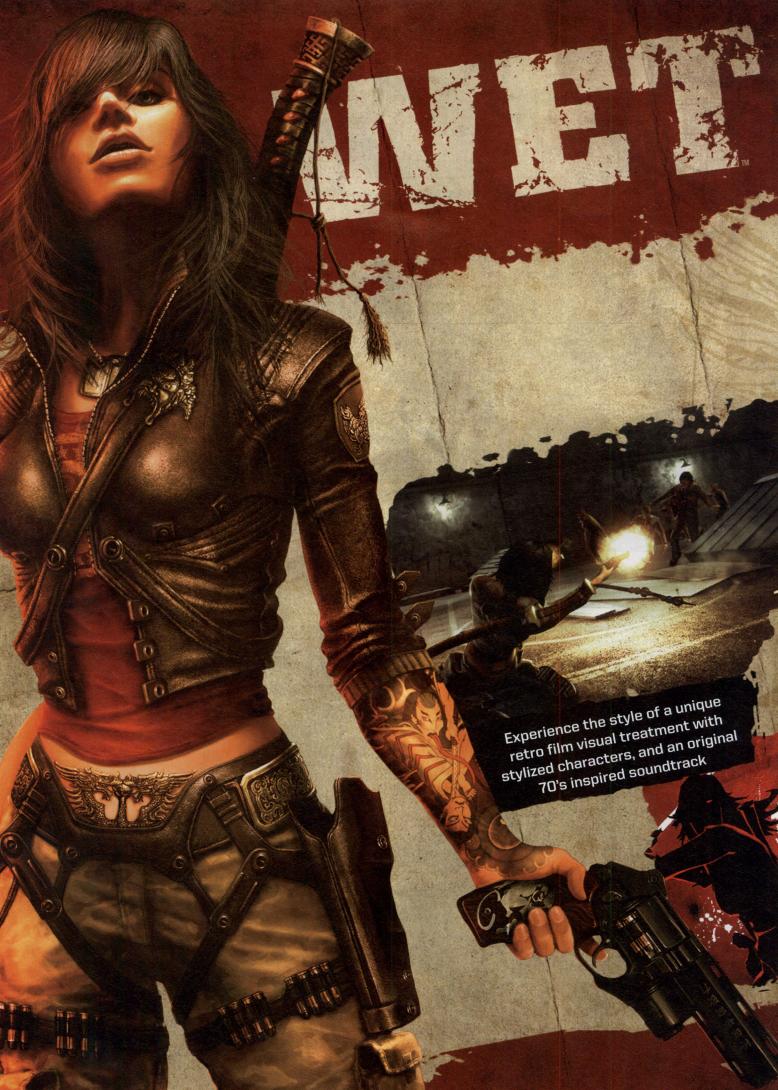


Dare to be Digital is Abertay's world premier computer games design competition designed solely for students. This year, would-be developers from the UK, Ireland, Norway, Canada, China and India are competing for a prestigious Dare winner's trophy and a nomination for the coveted BAFTA Ones to Watch Award. Think you've got what it takes to win? Dare to be Digital.

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LOCK and LOAD

Become Rubi Malone, a gun-for-hire equipped with an arsenal of acrobatic moves, over the top sword kills, and dual pistols. Experience the freedom to shoot anytime, anywhere in an adventure spanning three continents.

Over-the-top acrobatics, fantastic aerial sword attacks and high body count combine for the ultimate interactive action experience

Seamlessly blend three types of gameplay with a 360 degree slip-aiming gun targeting system, sword fighting, and acrobatic ability









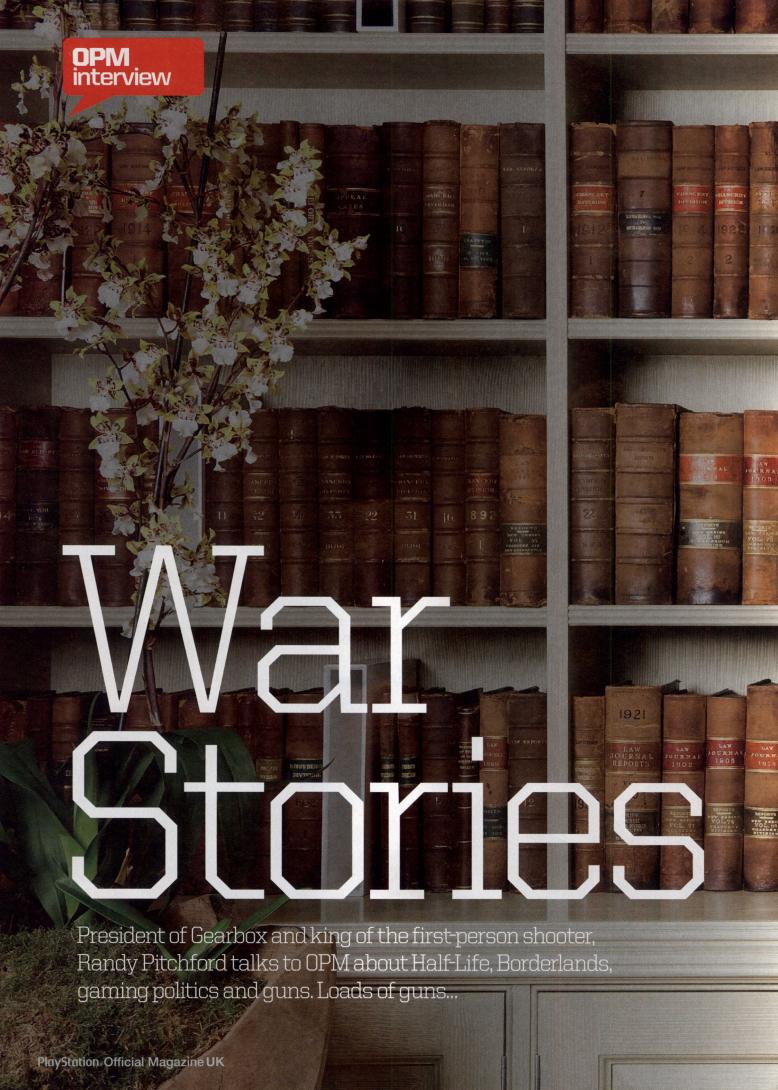


Artificial Mind





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interview Randy Pitchford

You started developing games as a child. How did that become a career?

You're going way back! Yeah, when I got involved with computers and writing my first game, I was really young. I wasn't making career decisions. It's like the new version of the plastic kits you glue together, but instead of glue, we were using software. That was new to my generation. But back then there wasn't an industry or a school – we were just figuring it out. With hobbies, we do them because we enjoy them, and I was fortunate. It was my wife – my girlfriend at that time – that helped me to realise I could make a career out of it. And I'm thankful for that.

You started by porting other games and making expansion packs. For Valve in particular...

The first game we shipped was Half-Life [The 1999 expansion pack, Opposing Force]. I love their stuff. We play a lot of Team Fortress 2 here at Gearbox, Portal is brilliant, and obviously I love Half-Life – I spent a number of years in that space and, with luck, I'll be able to come back to it at some point. So I love the work that they do, and the creative people there are so amazing and talented.

Do you think much has changed since you started? Do you think your hobbyist, PC-modding route is feasible now the industry is so much larger?

All developers are fundamentally PC developers. When we're working with a PS3, an Xbox or a Wii, our core platform is a PC interface for those devices. Each piece of hardware has its unique properties, especially when we're talking about the low level of communication with that hardware. But the development processes are on a PC.

So we're all fundamentally PC developers, and I think it's absolutely an open path. There's so much information out there, you can become a game maker by being self-taught. It requires a lot of discipline and commitment to the craft. But I don't think the first thing anyone does is going to be the best thing ever. It's like most things in life: the more we do, the better we get at it. I think having review and accountability for your results, getting feedback, helps you understand how to adapt. Especially when you're talking about entertainment.

What's been the biggest change in the games industry since you started?

When we started, the industry was small and markets weren't very large, so stakes were low. We were able to take a lot of risks. You're talking between one and ten guys making something and spending between three months to a couple of years on it. Today, our projects are three, four years sometimes.

And the team sizes exceed 100, 200 people. So the stakes are very high, and I have a feeling we're still yet to peak. It's very exciting because the other thing I remember is the time when the benchmark was 'I hope we sell 100,000 units'. That would be a victory. Today, we need 1,000,000+ just to break even.

Let's talk about Brothers In Arms – Gearbox's first original IP. When it came out WW2 shooters were at their peak and it was the only one trying different tactical gameplay. Was that the core idea, or a way to stand out? One of the owners of Gearbox – one of my partners – Brian Martel and I worked together at 3D Realms. One of the games he worked on was Across The Rhine. It was a tactical, top-down WW2 strategy game. You're looking at the world a mile away, at a unit that represents 500 men. We started expanding this notion of a soldier in war, and

were like, 'what if a squad can be with you?'

internally and we talked to Activision about it.

Our first concept was called Tour Of Duty

doing that then we win. And so does the customer. It's a great relationship.

Was there fear internally about doing a new game, especially when you've worked so much with familiar names? No, it's the opposite of fear. It's necessity. If

we don't do that, we risk losing the range.
Think about the choices in the games you play, like the spectrum of games you play.
You can't live your life doing the same thing, you can't eat the same meal every night, and you can't play the same game.

During development, Borderlands changed its look quite suddenly from a realistic look to an artistic one. Were you worried it would cause problems, like losing fans or recognition?

It's a risk! These guys went on their own and did it. I was talking to Brian Martel, who's creative director of the company and art director for the project. He was like, 'Well, Randy, we're trying this, and I think it's going to be cool, and you're just going to have to

"Every game has one. From Doom on, you've got to have a shotgun."

In my original sell-sheet I pitched the game with the tag-line they used for Call Of Duty: 'In war, no one fights alone.' And that was the pitch! We didn't know what theatre or era. It was more about being part of a squad – here's a time and space with a squad of guys.

You've talked publicly about launching a new game and the money involved. Is there a pressure to taking a risk with something unknown like Borderlands? Does it spoil the fun?

No, it makes the process more exciting, but it's definitely something to think about. It's fun to push boundaries and try new things. One of the thrills of being a designer and game maker is testing ourselves. At the same time we have a responsibility to make more [money] than we spend to keep doing what we're doing. When we spend a lot to take a risk, we have to be careful; so if it doesn't work out, it's still okay. Or we need enough confidence and belief in what we've developed that we can take that risk and be okay. Some of that influence helps you make better decisions for the customer. Because at the end of the day, the whole point is to provide entertainment. So if we succeed in

wait. We made a deal where we had three weeks to prototype and then we'd make a decision. Three weeks came, they had me go in the conference room and they had the prototype set up. I remember walking into the room thinking, 'I don't know what they've done; I don't know why they think this is a good idea. All I know is that whatever they've done means we're going to have to redo it all again. So I'm going to go in and shut them down.' Then it just punched me in the face. I've never seen anything like it. I was like, 'Oh my god, you're rendering the concept art!' All this attitude, style and personality was there that had never existed before.

How did you create so many guns?

Typically, what happens is, you're making a shooter, and you have 15-20 guns that are going to be in your game. It's time for the designers, artists, coders and whoever else to sit down and go, 'Okay guys, let's talk about our shotgun today.' Because every game has a shotgun. From Doom onwards, you've got to have a shotgun. And which one's best? Is it the Doom 2 shotgun? Doom 1? The Half-Life shotgun? Halo? The Jackhammer in Painkiller? Do you have a favourite shotgun?



interview

Randy Pitchford

The old Doom shotgun, because there was nice timing to it.

Yes! It's the reload cycle creating that dance, right? You've got to fire, cover, reload, fire, cover, reload – there's a rhythm and a metre to it. But it has a wide spread, so it's only good against close-range enemies. The Half-Life shotgun is very similar, the feel of it, but it's a quicker pace. It's like 'boom boom boom', not 'boom, chu-chink, boom, chu-chink'.

So we're having the discussion about shotguns in Borderlands, and we have these goals about growth, choice and discovery. The discussion starts as it usually does, 'Which should be our shotgun? Wouldn't it be cool with a choice? Let's have one with a lot of damage, but I can only fire it so often. What if we have another here that I can fire quickly, but does less damage, shot for shot? That's a choice. Which one should we do?' Most game makers make the choice before the game ships – they make the choice for you.

So let's imagine how wide that spectrum could be between firing, damage and spread. What kind of round it is. Whether it has buckshot and how many pellets it has. What do the pellets do when they hit you? What if it fires acid rounds that melt people's faces off? And then suddenly, in 15 minutes, we've developed 1,000 shotguns.

How do you make so many variations?

We can't build 1,000 shotguns. So we made this AI called Gear Builder. Back then we were so ambitious – 'Oh yeah, maybe you can make thousands of guns for us.' But as we got into it, we started putting in the content and gear from [in-game] manufacturers, which all have different styles and materials like metals, alloys, plastics and wood – we were so excited that it worked. Our first prototype had 20,000-40,000 weapons. By the time we went to show the game publicly, which was at Leipzig a couple of years ago, we were up to half a million. Today, I don't know. There are more than 15 million. There are a lot of guns.

Presumably, you can't test all those weapons? Have you got protection to stop Gear Builder going crazy and creating nuclear sniper missiles?

That happens and it's part of the fun. We use automated systems that test them all theoretically. But what is it and how does it feel? The spectrum's pretty wide. We've been playing the game a lot – tens of thousands of hours – and, yeah, we've been surprised.

You primarily make shooters. When Sony showed its motion control tech at E3 it was demonstrated as an FPS controller. You think there's potential? Yeah, I think it's interesting... We're looking at that very closely.



Who is... Randy Pitchford?

Randy Pitchford is president of Gearbox Software, which was established in 1999 and made its name creating expansion packs and ports for the Half-Life series. The company has a wide range of experience, having worked on a spread of titles including James Bond 007: Nightfire, Tony Hawk's 3, Halo and Samba de Amigo. Gearbox's own games include Brothers in Arms, Borderlands and Aliens: Colonial Marines.







Have you had a play with it at all?

Yeah. It's fun stuff. It's pretty cool. I don't have anything to announce right now, but I do think it'd be interesting to see what happens.

You've worked with Valve, who seem somewhat anti-PS3. How have you found working with PS3 generally?

The PS3 is awesome. I think Valve... I don't know why they're doing that. It's weird. But yeah, the PlayStation platform's really cool. It's different to others and it's certainly a challenge to be able to develop software for. But that's where the fun is, right?

I noticed something on the net not too long ago. Doug Lombardi [Valve's VP of Marketing] had to take a swipe at the PS3 again, and I thought it was foolish. I read it the same way I read fanboys. Like there's a guy who bought the Sony platform and he's a Sony guy, so he decides he's going to spend a certain percentage of his time bashing Microsoft. And there's a guy on the Microsoft side doing the same thing. Those guys are just childish and narrow minded. It's the same kind of thing. He's like, 'I'm over here, I must be right, because I'm a smart guy, so f*** those people over there.' No, it's a big world, all things can be cool.

Same with brands, platforms, tools. Valve think their own stuff is the only stuff that matters, to the point where they have their own distribution platform. It's like, 'I don't care about retail, about Marketplace, or PSN, I'm going to have Steam.' It's cool, it's good, and they're doing a good job but at the same time they're reliant on the rest of the world. They had to do that deal with EA. When I see the Left 4 Dead ad on the television I don't see a Valve logo, I see the EA logo. And when I bought it, I bought it at a store.

I'm actually kind of mad at Doug because with The Orange Box, he said the 360 and PC versions are the good ones and the PS3 one is like the stepchild because some other developer made it. Well, you [Valve] don't really think that, because look what you've done on the PC side. You've supported that, you've added all this content to Team Fortress 2, and you've left us hanging. It's hard to accept that genuinely, because I know the business, I know you guys make half the money on the PlayStation version because you've got other fingers in the pie, and other developers getting a cut. It benefits you if nobody buys that, and only buys the PC version, because you make the most money. There's this underlying sleaziness.

You know what, I thought the performance was a little slower on PS3, but it looked better. The colours were nicer, I thought the image looked better on PS3. It was a trade-off between the performance and the visuals. And I like visuals.



Home DOs and DON'Ts

The best (and worst) of avatar fashion

f you spend more than a few minutes in Home each week, the chances are you'll meet more people virtually than you do in real life. And that means there's every reason to make sure your Home avatar looks hot – or, if not hot, then at least not like a car that's driven through the lady's section in M&S. Taking a big cue from New York fashion mag Vice's incendiary Dos & Don'ts regular, we've been trawling PlayStation's social space to find its style champions and freak shows, skating along the fine line that divides edgy cool from shuttle crash disaster. And we've written some mean captions too. Enjoy.



DO The flexibility of this estate agent/catalogue model/serial killer look doesn't just happen by accident. Here's a man who thinks about all the ways a night could explode before he goes pretend bowling.



DO So here's the rule: everyone in Home who bought a Star Trek outfit gets their account deleted except for sad-looking girls who remind me of Deanna Troi. I just spelt Deanna Troi without looking it up.



DO No way could real life give you a beard that tight and symmetrical. Screw curing cancer together, prudish, bordering on German, digital grooming is the most important use of PS3's Cell chip yet.



DO Jesus Christ, if we'd realised Home had an option to dress up like Billy Joel with three-day-bender stubble and a velvet-trimmed power suit we wouldn't have wasted all that time playing games.



DO If they finally declare who's won the internet, this will absolutely be the guy who came second. The pout, the glasses, the clothes somebody who has actual sex might wear. He looks like he runs Home.



DO The real question is, if you had total

control over your physical appearance,

why wouldn't you give yourself incredible

boobs and a killer fringe? Then just rock a

generic Home tee, all like whatever man...

DO The platinum lesbian flattop and gunslinger moustache are like nitrate and glycerin – poisonous alone, but explosive when combined. Dude can wear any kind of vest he wants. He's a scientist.



DO Rocking up to the Everybody's Golf space dressed like this is the equivalent of wearing assless leather chaps and a Robert Mugabe T-shirt to the UN HQ - the rules say it's wrong, your heart says right.



DO Doesn't matter if you're not a girl.
Dye your hair magenta, put on an ugly
-assed print T-shirt and hang around
dancing in the bowling alley. Like bees to
honey and the easiest lols you'll ever get.



DO There's a point where sexless loser swings back to big-balled superhero, and it's hovering somewhere around this guy's red-dyed cornrows. Seriously, why would you ever wear anything that isn'tred?

Home DOs and DON'Ts



DON'T Every second guy in Home has this goddamn cardigan – it's free, and it's totally inoffensive, like wearing WASPish apathy only in stretchy acrylic fibre form. Or absolutely anything from Gap.



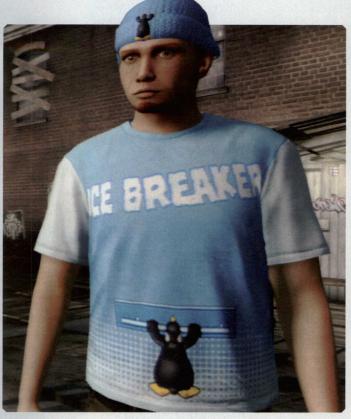
DON'T One way to spot kids pretending to be girls is that they think all women dress like their aging single mum (the one whose heavy makeup and drinking made them gender confused in the first place).



DON'T Really? You're wearing your emo gloves in Home? Isn't this meant to be the place you go to escape from the lifetime of bad relationships and type two diabetes you're busy mapping out in the real world?



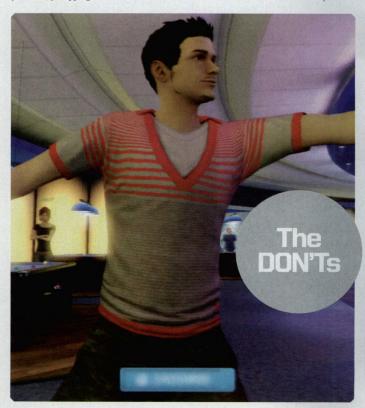
DON'T Ding! Another way to spot boys pretending to be girls is that they think chicks this hot watch Star Trek. Pro tip: that's why the guy in the sweet stripy sweater can't bare to even look at you.



DON'T Hey, we've all logged some long hours beating level 20 of the Icebreaker arcade game just to get the penguin tee and hat set. But the difference is that seconds afterwards everyone else realised they were only any use as virtual jimjams. Going outside with this stuff is like wearing flipflops to a board meeting or an I'm With Stupid T-shirt on a first date. It says I surrender.



DON'T Sometimes it's not even that an outfit is bad. This dude clearly knows how to dress, it's just that he dresses like a lemon infiltrating human society while disguised as John Cena.



DON'T Bleurgh. You just know that this guy spent the last two hours picking out that dumbass ironic pencil moustache, then got himself so pumped that he threw the camo pants and Primark V-neck on in five minutes before rolling down to the bowling alley and kicking out dance macros in front of probably-a-dude-really chicks. Hey guy, get back to EA's poker space with all the other creeps.



DON'T Don't listen to what your sister says: girls don't like flowers or compliments or walks in the park, they like boys with strangler gloves, a sports jacket and a thousand-yard stare.

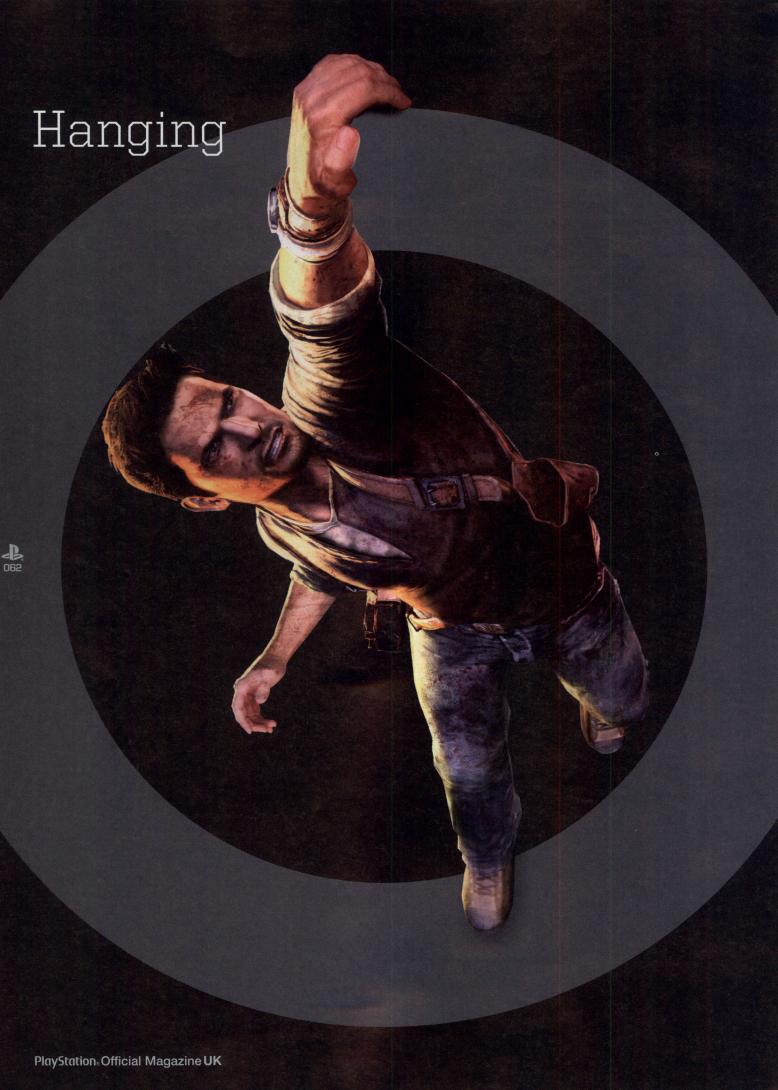


DON'T Note to Microsoft's marketing team. If you want to 'check out' Home, you need to come up with a better undercover outfit than this. Two seconds later every other speech bubble just said, 'Hey, narcl'



DON'T Look, even if you are actually super old there's no sense in trying to make an accurate version of yourself unless you want everyone's reaction to be 'are you that albino dude from Pan's Labyrinth?'





Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



Nathan Drake is back! Prepare to suspend disbelief as we find out what to expect from Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

for a Hero



Uncharted 2: Among Thieves



064

■ Drake and Elana visit Nepal and Tibet searching for Marco Polo's lost treasure.

adventurous, roquish - he's like the older brother we want to be. So when Uncharted 2: Among Thieves' co-lead designer Neil Druckmann starts describing him thus, "This guy's a criminal. He hangs out around criminals," it's hard not to feel protective. Not Drake? He's one of the good guys, surely? Druckmann sticks to his guns: "We start with a heist. Drake's robbing a museum with a friend." It's not how we pictured our hero's triumphant return. Druckmann's adamant, though. "We wanted to say, 'you saw him as this treasure hunter, but guess

e like Nathan

Drake. A lot. Funny,

Dark days

So does Drake's murky background tie into the darker game that's been hinted

what he does most of the time?'

"It's a bigger, more impressive challenge than the first game."

at? "The tone of the story is slightly darker," Druckmann explains." We're not making Drake more angsty but the conflict is a lot more personal." Uncharted 2's recently revealed Ice Cave level is a good example of the game's nastier edge. "Coming into that level, Drake is at a low point. He wants to give up after everything he's been through. He's seen people injured and dying. In his words, everything that he touches turns to shit."

What's happened to Drake before he reaches the caves isn't clear. He's a broken man who has all but given up until he meets Schaffer, an aging former explorer who convinces him to push on. Druckmann talks us through the level: "It's much more platformingbased than some of the game, which is more combat-heavy. You've come from a tight, cavernous area and, as Drake comes into the room, he sees these giant temples, all these mechanisms and his goal at the end."

It's a bigger, more impressive challenge than the first game; a trial there to test those like Drake who are hunting Shamballa and the lost Cintamani Stone – a mysterious artefact said to grant its owner incredible power. As Druckmann makes clear, that's probably why the cave is so lethal. "Drake jumps from prayer wheel to prayer wheel as they rotate and things collapse around him. He actually starts going inside the walls and seeing their inner workings

Who's who?

This time Drake has two love interests: Elena, the blonde lovely from the first game, and Chloe, a new, darker haired companion. His mentor and fired Sulty is back, although new oldie Schaffer, an aging explorer, is also on hand to help out. Finally there's Zoran, a new bad guy who's also after the Cintamani Stone – a legendary relic of great power.

















Uncharted 2: Among Thieves





During a frantic train journey Drake must fight off soldiers and a helicopter as the carriages rattle through Nepal.



Drake's not the only treasure hunter, there are several factions to

battle against.

"Drake's running and fighting on a moving train. Cool stuff will happen."

- all these gears and chains that he has to traverse."

Fortunately, Drake's been practicing while he's been away, and has a few new moves to help him as he hangs from his fingertips. Drake's new free-climbing ability is a subtle tweak, rather than a complete reworking of the original

game's beautifully balanced controls, as Druckmann

explains, "When edges are protruding from the wall we have this new system that will automatically line up [Drake's] hands and feet with the ledges, so you can just climb along. It lets us put all these edges on the wall and lets you choose how to climb." So Drake is far more mobile, but there's more to it than that.

"One thing that really was important for us was combining platforming with combat more than we did in the first game," explains Druckmann. "You come into a level and say, 'How am I going to fight all these enemies? Oh look, I see all these ledges on the walls. I'd better climb up there, stealth kill that guy, take his weapon and take out all his buddies." Stealth is a worrying word, though, for an all-action hero. But this is "action stealth", says Druckmann. "We never want you to skip whole combat areas; it's just another way for you to fight." The decision is yours to take. "You come into areas and enemies are searching for something, breaking stuff and looking for clues or fighting other factions. This gives you the opportunity to say 'Okay, well, I've got good weapons so I'm going in with all guns blazing or 'Okay, I'm going to hang back and stealth around these guys, then take them out"."

With combat and climbing combined, and stealth playing a greater role, it's good to know there will be some changes to the hand-to-hand encounters. "We revamped our melee system to make it much more intuitive,"

Druckmann elaborates. "We have classes of enemies. There are light soldiers where you can just jam on ①, do a combo and take them out. As we go up, there are enemies who'll counter your moves – at the right moment the game slows down and you see them winding up a punch. You can press ② to counter them, and then finish them with ②. Then, as you progress even further, you have these big armour guys who, if you melee them, Drake will wrestle their helmets off. Then you need to get some distance to take them out."

Dead weight

Combat isn't always so straightforward. Another new level, called Keep Moving, sees Drake meeting up with Elena, his documentary-making love interest from the last game. The two cross paths while Elena's working as a journalist on the trail of Zoran Lazarevic, the new bad guy who's racing Drake to recover the Cintamani Stone. There's a shoot-out and Elena's cameraman gets hit, forcing Drake to fight his way out while carrying





the injured man, followed by Elena and Chloe (Drake's new squeeze) who don't exactly see eye to eye. "Chloe and Elena both care for Drake, but their moral lines are aimed in different directions. says Druckmann, "Elena wants to help and Chloe's a self-preservationist. She wants to drop this guy - he's injured."

It's a complete change of pace to the earlier serenity of the Ice Cave. "You're carrying this guy, it's raining, soldiers are closing in. You have Chloe yelling at you to drop him while Elena's saying to keep going. The girls are kicking down doors for you, they're getting attacked by soldiers - it's this cool cinematic moment that you're playing." This variation is key to making Uncharted 2 even more exciting than its predecessor. "Variety and pacing is something we felt we were pretty good at in Uncharted [Drake's Fortune]," says Druckmann. "We really wanted to push it this time." One scene in particular promises to ramp up the action, "Drake's going to be running and fighting on a moving train

that's careening around corners, going

from Nepal into the Himalayas, in real time. Cool stuff's going to happen."

Uncharted territory

One thing that's new to the Uncharted experience this time is the online play. Interestingly, the recent beta trial, where a few lucky gamers (including OPM) got to try a multiplayer demo, has fed back into the single-player game according to Druckmann: "By having multiplayer, it let us refine our combat mechanics, how the camera is behind Drake or timing on reloads. It's much tighter than the

first game." To find out more, we speak to multiplayer designer Justin Richmond. "When we first started, we thought it would be cool if we had it. But would it work?" he explains. "So we tested, and almost immediately everyone was

Meet the makers

feature

Brains behind the game



Neil Druckmann, Co-lead designer

"In each area we kind of know how it begins and how it ends and then we can weave in these gameplay moments. We try to mirror the emotional state of what we want the player and Drake to feel with the gameplay. For example, if it's the Ice Cave, it's a low point, so we use the cinematic techniques for it-we dress the set in cool colours, it's more desaturated. There's also slower gameplay because Drake is finding his way again. Whereas when an ally is injured, it's very fast paced and a lot of guys are after you. There are loads of explosions and you feel the stress Drake's feeling. It's interesting because Drake falls in between Elena and Chloe. Chloe would look out for herself more. Elena's more altruistic than Drake. It lets us show different facets of Drake."



Justin Richmond, Multiplayer designer

"We were pretty excited about the numbers that we were getting [on the betal. Over 100,000 was beyond our wildest dreams. The response was overwhelmingly positive and we learned a lot. It was really cool for us. because it threw up a bunch of things -looking at how they were playing, the kind of stuff they were using, the guns they liked, the guns they didn't like. the kill ratios in the game - that were super-useful to us. We actually tuned a bunch of the weapon placements. We were able to do stuff on the fly. So in the middle of the beta we actually moved stuff around, changed guns based on what people were saying on the forums and the data we were seeing. We also had this issue where grenades were way overpowered. So we immediately went about fixing that and now it's totally fine."

Uncharted 2: Among Thieves





When Elena's cameraman is injured, it's up to Drake to save him.

playing and saying, 'this is really fun, we need to do this.'" So was he pleased with the response to the beta? "I was pleasantly surprised, in a good way, to see how quickly people adapted to the vertical gameplay," he admits. "Players were very quickly adapting to climbing buildings, jumping off signs and all that kind of stuff, which was really neat. There were definitely some secret sniping spots that I didn't expect people to catch onto quite so quickly."



merely a limited taster of what Richmond has planned.
"The way it works is: you earn money that increases your rank and you can spend in our store system on Boosters (perk-like upgrades), co-op weapon upgrades,

new skins and new

he explains. "All these

taunt animations,"

things customise your

While the beta was fun, it was

experience. And the Booster system unlocks per rank, so we give you more options to spend your money on.

"There were sniping spots I didn't expect people to catch onto so quickly."

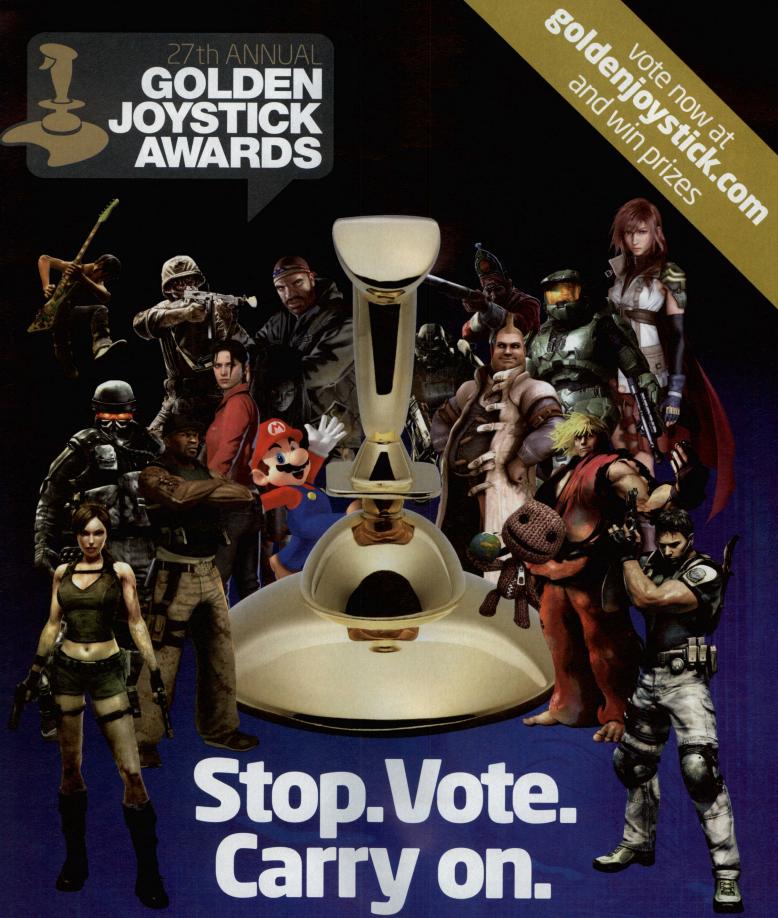
I think there are 25 or 26 Boosters you can unlock." OPM pushes for more info on Boosters, but Richmond isn't telling. "I can't really talk about any of it," he says. "We're holding that stuff back." He does, however, outline weapon upgrades: "You can buy an upgrade that gives you more ammo in the gun. Tier two gives you increased accuracy, and tier three gives you a fast reload time."

Sharp shooting

One final multiplayer twist that sounds really interesting is the Cinema mode. "Every game you play gets recorded," explains Richmond. "You can watch games you've just played, jump between players, go into Free-Cam mode and fly around, and go into slo-mo and take screenshots of your kills." But that's not the best part. "We added the ability to drop the background out so you can composite characters into other scenarios," Richmond goes on.

"You could have Drake on the beach if you want. Also, when talking in the headset, the characters move their mouths, so you can make Drake have a conversation with Elena and create a whole machinima setup. There's a special gameplay mode called Machinima, which has all the maps with no guns and nothing placed on them, so you could make a mini-movie very easily." But you'll need to record it externally, as Richmond points out, "Because it's a game file you can publish it online and send it to friends but you'd have to output it to record it."

It means a game inspired by matinee adventures has gone full-circle, helping fans make their own films, which makes Richmond happy. "We think that's really cool," he enthuses. So when Uncharted 2: Among Thieves is released in October (exclusive review next issue), Nathan Drake's next big adventure could end up being the one you make.



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feature EyePet

ccording to Sony, EyePet is an advanced augmented reality system that adds high definition visuals and robust recognition software to the developer's already strong camera technology. It's also *really* cute. Apparently, anyway. We're all over that first thing – we know how the tech works, we know why it's so exciting, and what it might mean for the future. The cuteness, though, is a bit of a blind spot. So we got in a pair of children – my children, actually – to play with the Pet and tell us what they thought.

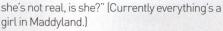
My daughter Madeleine loves animals – so much so that I have an alter ego called Catty, who can only talk in miaows and who Maddy demands to speak to several times a day. She calls EyePet "the monkey" and, from the moment she sees the trailer, she's hooked. "Why does the monkey want to say hello?" she asks. The only time she's had a reaction like this to a videogame character was with sackboy – another wide-eyed, open face with appealingly child-like features.

Terms of endearment

Of course, getting your character to be instantly fall-in-loveable doesn't happen by accident. When we visit Sony's London Studio to speak to the game's producer Nicolas Doucet, we see concept art of the Pet in newborn and adult forms, which haven't made it into the final game. "We made sure that the age we picked was a prime time for appeal," Doucet explains. "Not too young that he can't do anything, and not too old." The team also spent a long time deciding on the mix of human and animal characteristics the Pet should have, ending up, Doucet says, with a mix of "90% animal, but 10% humanistic, so we could get the character across". So Maddy is pretty much spot on with the monkey comments.

Madeleine's only three, and the mirrored movement interaction that PlayStation Eye

requires is beyond her.
She watches EyePet like
a cartoon that she's a part
of, and sits patiently while
Jay plays. "Do you want
to stroke the monkey,
Maddy?" I ask while
it's strolling around
the screen, rubbing up
against our furniture.
"Yes," she says. "But



"No that's right, she's just on the telly. But you're on the telly too," I say. "It's a very clever machine, isn't it, Maddy?" Jay chips in.

Jay is seven and very comfortable with PS3. "You've played lots of games before, haven't you?" I ask when we sit down to talk about EyePet. "Yes," he says, "and make sure you tell everyone in the magazine I can beat you at FIFA." He can – and he's also pretty good at Burnout Paradise and Pain. The point is he can do traditional games, with all the demands they place on dexterity and having big hands, but he's also no stranger to Sega SuperStars (probably the best EyeToy game for PS2) and – whisper it – motion control on the Wii.

wrong way entirely. His favourite games are blowing bubbles that the Pet pops ("You press a bear's head to make the bubbles, but it's not really there it's just on the telly, and if you blow a big bubble the monkey gets stuck in it") and the trampoline ("He bounces on the trampoline and you have to move the card thing to make him stay on it").

When asked what her favourite bit of the game is, Maddy thinks for a moment. "Erm. The pink," she replies. "You mean the dressing up?" "Yes." While Jay controlled the pad, Maddy had directed a restyling of the Pet involving a violent neon dye job, white highlights and, at one stage, a dragon outfit and American football helmet. Doucet explains how much work has gone into rendering the fur – "every

"It's hard to tell what the longterm appeal will be, but it's robust, playable, and very cute."

Jay gets EyePet (which he renames 'Cooks The Monkey') straight away. After the initial fuss of getting the camera set up correctly (the game needs a large flat empty space in order for the Pet to appear) he has an intuitive grasp of how to interact with it – he reaches for the Pet, and it jolts out of his way, looking up at his hand. He reaches again, more slowly, and this time manages to stroke it gently on its virtual back. Success.

If you conjure it and leave it alone it'll walk around the camera-captured version of your living room, reacting to you and your furniture. But it can also play games. EyePet uses what's called the magic card for its more complicated interactions. This is a small rectangular black and white sheet of plastic with a white pawprint

and square marked on it, patterns that the camera can pick out even when the card is held at an angle and under poor light conditions.

Play time

So when Jay activates the minigames menu, a small carousel of activities that are beamed out of the card like a hologram on the screen, the game can

track its position until the card is facing the

single bit of hair exists, with its own physics" – but the joy for Maddy is that it brings the monkey one step closer to being something she can physically play with.

Jay's favourite thing, on the other hand, is the health scan. Here, the card becomes an X-ray device which can be moved over the Pet to check the condition of his brain, heart, stomach and muscles (to my aging eyes it looks like the futuristic airport scanner from Total Recall, only with less murder). It's got something more about it than the instant-hit fun of the magic card games, and Jay's really keen to check over every bit of the pet and fix any problems he finds (Cooks is hungry, and gets a truckload of cookies poured over his head as a remedy).

It makes sense, then, that this is where the finished game will tie the day to day interactions into a longer term Pet relationship. At the beginning of the game a professor figure will give you the Pet to look after, and you'll send check-up reports after every session to the online Pet Healthcare Centre, which rewards you for treating your furry friend well. Without this in place, it's hard to tell what EyePet's long-term appeal will be, but what we can say is that the technology is very robust, very playable and, according to our experts, very cute.

Nathan Ditum

Best camera games

EyeToy: Play (2003, PS2)

The original EyeToy game, developed by Sony's London Studio to showcase the newly released camera. It did so with 12 mini-games, including the self-explanatory Keep Ups and Plate Spinner, as well as more conceptual' efforts like UFO Juggler and Wishi Washi.



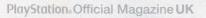
Sega Superstars (2004, PS2)
Sega leveraged its colourful cast of videogames legends to make unexpectedly brilliant use of Sony's camera tech. Frantic, wavey-handed games of Samba Di Amigo and ChuChu Rocket are still one of the best



Eye Of Judgement (2007, PS3) The first major PlayStation Eye game reads codes from character cards to power an on-screen game of

from character cards to power an on-screen game of monster chess. It's a bit like the game they play in Star Wars ("Let the Wookie win"), only with a more fiddly interface and fewer threats of limb removal.







feature EyePet





Snap was a favourite – it was something Jay could win at, which he enjoyed – while Maddy was totally fixated by the super-endearing look of concentration on the EyePet's little face.

PlayStation。Official Magazine UK

■ The EyePet checks itself out with a glowing smile when you change its clothing.



EvePet



Interview

EyePet producer Nicolas Doucet talks cutting edge technology and optimising cuteness in our exclusive chat

OPM We've been arguing over what the pet looks like - a monkey, a cat, a dog. Was it based on anything?

Nicolas Doucet We went through several rounds of design with the Pet. Because it has certain abilities - like drawing, and also singing, which we haven't shown yet - if we had gone down the route of using a traditional pet, then there would have been certain expectations people would have of things he can and can't do. So we knew that we needed something that had a starting point that people could relate to, but we wanted to have abilities that were more fantasy-like. Our starting points were 'what's cute?' and 'what would people like to do when they have, for example, a kitten?' You know, [the ability to] play with string or something like that. But then we wanted to take it a bit further, and obviously monkeys are quite interesting because they have abilities that are close to those of humans, but are still animalistic.

OPM As an engineer, how do you create something that people are going to care about and have an emotional reaction to? ND I think we found out as we went along. Our speciality has always been with EyeToy Play, and clearly EyePet is more about character, and design - making it cute and cheeky, but always having a sense that, whether you're a boy or girl of any age, you can still tap into the heart of players. That's a critical part, because if you get that, then people start empathising. We had this complicated matter where we wanted to have an animal, and you know that dogs don't really smile and cats don't really smile, but we wanted the EyePet to have all of those facial expressions.

OPM You were telling us before about an interesting story that happened while you were filming an advert?

ND We were doing the E3 trailer. There's a feature in the game where you can show your face to the Pet and he sits under you, and if you smile, he reacts. It's something we started playing with - facial interaction something we want to take further in the future. And so a few kids were lined up on the floor, and all their faces were on the screen. But one girl had very, very strong facial features. It was really her eyes everything was very well defined. So the Pet had a tendency to always go for her. It would turn to her and just look up. And it was really great because this is what we wanted it to do. But it happened in a very natural way, and all the crew on stage that day were convinced that the Pet had developed a bond and actually could smell that girl, and it was that girl's pet. And, in a way, it's not something we designed, but we create an illusion and people run with it. That's really good.

OPM Can you shape his personality in any way? If you're cruel to him, will he turn into a scared creature? If you praise him a lot, will he be happier?

ND We went for a short-term reaction. We wanted to make sure that we made a game, and not a pet sim. Our audience are people who need immediate fun. We put a little bit of that in there, in the sense that, for example, you can work him up in a fight and he'll get grumpy, but that grumpiness only lasts for the time that you interact with him. If you stroke him then he can repair that very quickly. We haven't gone for deeply rooted moods. But it's something that we can build upon potentially in the future.

OPM There's not exactly a story - you're given a pet and there's a Pet Centre. Can you explain a bit more about the framework? ND On your first go with EyePet, you're presented with this professor, who teaches you how to set up the game. After that you receive your egg, and you hatch your egg for the first time, so that's how EyePet comes to life - it's a really sweet moment. And the professor is there with you at all times with video link messages. So every time you have a particular turning point in the progression of the game, the professor is there with you. You really get a sense that somewhere in this world, there is an EyePet Centre, there is a building, there are people who know about you. So this is something that... well, we'll see in time, but if we had to create the illusion that somewhere the centre does exist, who knows, maybe we'll end up building a real store. It could be quite interesting for us to try to take the game into

OPM And you send your results to the Pet Centre at the end of the day?

the real world.

ND That's right. So you scan your pet and the results show if it's well trained, its mental stimulation, and so on. You send that report, and the next day when you connect to the game, the professor comes up and according to how well you did, you get different prizes. It's really to enforce the sense that there's someone on the other side monitoring you.

OPM Are there any plans to go online and upload those results, maybe for Crufts-like pet competitions?

ND The competitive aspect is something we will grow in the future. We're starting with a

See and play

EyeToy Play was the first game to be released for the EyeToy on PS2, and, like EyePet, it was developed by Sony's London Studio. As well as two sequels to 'Play, the studio has also made EyeToy Groove, EyeToy Kinetic and SpyToy, all of which use the camera as a basic motion controller. EyePet is the first time the studio has used the camera for complex interactions with an in-game character.



EyePet might be impressive, but virtual pets are nothing new. In 1997 some free software introduced MOPy, a goldfish simulation where the user accrued points by using their printer. If MOPy wasn't fed it would become aggressive, depressed, and then sicken and die. It currently holds the Guinness World Record for the "most downloaded cyber

pet". The '90s also saw the arrival of the Tamagotchi, a small, handheld device that stored a pet (a cat, dog, or baby) that needed feeding, cleaning and recreation on a regular basis. The trend has now evolved to pet care MMO's like neopets.com, and robots like the Sony Aibo.



EvePet This is how EyePet is able to track the movements of players, even when they're four years old and dancing around in their pants. The pattern on the front of the card of a paw print inside a square – marked in contrasting black and white – is highly visible to the PlayStation Eye, so even in bad light and at obtuse angles it's recognisable. In-game, the card is the launch pad for the magic games menu, as well as doubling for several other objects - a trampoline, a cookie jar and

LittleBigShop

If they build it, Cooks won't be the only Sony mascot to get his own, real world shop. Back in November 2008 Little Big Planet's sackboy had his own pop-up shops in Manchester and London. They were free for anyone who wanted to drop in, play the game, and mess about with glue and marker pens. When we visited we found super users building locally themed levels (the Manchester store had Old Trafford, Noel Gallagher and a Man City supporter trapped in a cagel, an arts and craft section and a competition to design the best sackboy



OPM On the technical side, did you learn anything new about the camera, or any new techniques?

The magic card

an X-ray scanner

ND Yeah, that's been the biggest jump forward. There are two aspects to it. In some cases we've gone down some very complicated routes to do something guite simple, and maybe they didn't work very well. And actually when we've gone back and thought, 'what does the user actually want to do?' we've thought about it in a much simpler way and it's worked ten times better.

Take sound recognition. Sometimes you can go the route of doing a passable voice recognition. But sometimes you're only looking for a clap or a note, and in that case you don't really need to be looking for a voice. Next to that is a lot of stuff that is genuinely high-tech, like the card tracking.

When we first did the tracking, we didn't worry so much about robustness because it was close to the camera, and I guess [we thought] the audience would be more controlled. With kids, we know they were going to be running and jumping around, breaking things - so all the focus has gone into robustness, and the ability to track the card in bad conditions.

And then there's the drawing as well. The drawing has commissioned lots of technology and a little while back, we put a video online...

OPM Was it the tanks?

ND That's right, yeah. We kind of took the same approach and discussed it with them, and we had one of those guys coming over helping out for a bit. That was one of the starting points, being able to show even a shaking image to the camera and make it work. Then there was the idea of extracting

the console in real time that's been the big challenge for us. **OPM** Are you sad that everyone asks you about drawing rude things?

an outline and it becoming a 3D object. All of

combining them and making them work on

these phases are technologies that have

existed for some time on their own - it's

ND No - I'm not sad. I think we've got to be realistic and I think it crossed so many people's minds the first time we had this drawing technology. I think when you talk about user-generated content, self expression, you've got to take everything as it comes. I believe that ultimately, and you see things like Wikipedia, the large majority of people will do something good. A very small amount will try and undermine that.

OPM We had reviews editor Nathan's kids come in to play the game...

ND How did they get to grips with the fact there's nothing in front of them? And seeing themselves in the TV?

OPM They seemed to be fine that it wasn't in front of them. Maddy would come and sit next to the screen and touch it, but they seemed to just accept it.

ND We're finding that with children, actually. Someone said that technology is a concept that only exists if you weren't born with it, when it's something you've had to adapt to. But kids nowadays, with certain things like the internet and watching TV... they just dive in and it makes sense. Which in a way sometimes works against us, because we put so much effort into making this 'wow!' And some kids just walk in and they're like, 'that's it?!'

more immediate feature, which is the photo and video upload. You can take video clips of you and your pet at any time, then post them online and share them with your friends. That's the basic feature. Then we're adding the profiles. In the end we want to have a sort of pet profile, the equivalent of something that you might find on Facebook or Twitter pages.

OPM Presumably there'll have to be some sort of moderation system, because it's a video feed?

ND Yes. We've been pushing for premoderation with this sort of content. 'Online', 'children', 'video feeds' in the same sentence? Certainly, from our point of view, we've been pushing for moderation. Obviously it comes with cost and time. It's a big investment, but that's the way it should go.

OPM Presumably there'll be downloadable content available - some new clothes to wear and toys...

ND We haven't finalised anything, but we've been approached by two really big companies. The store itself is in-game. That was really important for us, to make sure the audience don't have to understand the overall structure of how PlayStation works, because they can get everything from the store. There will be free costumes, and the very cool stuff will be paid for. We wanted good value for money with DLC, especially with children...

OPM Please can we put in a request for a sackboy costume?

ND Actually, we've looked at all the internal IPs that we have and sackboy was one of



Pet fashion

It's fitting that EyePet is in discussions to include a sackboy outfit, as LittleBigPlanet has blazed a trail in terms of exploiting first-party characters and themes to use in creative, customisable ways Downloadable LPB add-on packs have included Metal Gear Solid 4, Heavenly Sword and LocoRoco, while Ratchet & Clank and Uncharted are also in the works

At GDC in 2008 Sony's booth was home to a tech demo that formed the basis of EyePet's magic drawing feature. Players used pen and paper to draw tanks in three separate parts, marking a red dot at the point at which the turret should rotate. The PlayStation Eye was able to read these diagrams and recreate them onscreen as pad-controlled tanks, with animated caterpillar tracks and bullet-firing turrets. It recognised even the most ornate designs, and the replication from the drawing to the

screen was perfect. From tanks to penis-shaped balloons in only a year? That's progress.





UFC Undisputed: 2009 V Fight Night Round 4

Gameplay

Brilliant. Because fights can end instantly-you never want to be on the end of a Mirko Cro Cop roundhouse kick to the skull - you've always got a shot at victory, even if you've taken a battering. Master the tricky right stick submissions and the depth and variety of fights is simply unparalleled.

often enough.

satisfying, but unlike in UFC, don't happen

Classic fights presented by UFC president Dana White are a nice touch, and the career mode is fun if shallow. But it's online where this shines, with opponents often keen to re-enact big recent bouts. Pick Lesnar and they'll choose Frank Mir; select Bisping and they'll go Henderson. With little lag, it's infinitely

> Entrances look ace, but lack any sort of big fight feel - diluting the overall atmosphere.

Gameplay

satisfying.

Strong for the most part. With thousands of different animations on offer, every punch produces a specific contextual result. It certainly looks lovely, but it can occasionally feel a little spongy. Couple in the fact that sudden KOs are all too rare - even when you're as powerful and pumped up as Iron

> Mike-and Fight Night Round 4, though good, finishes

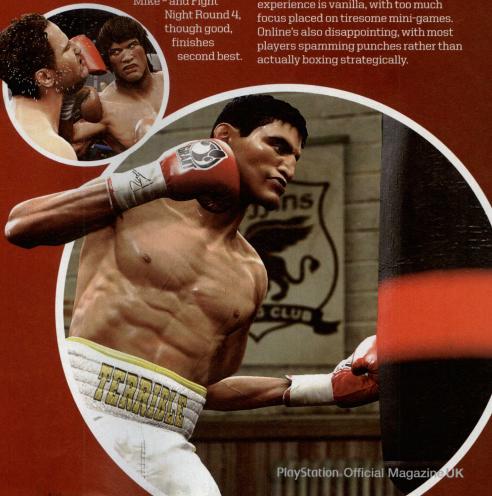
PS Eye enables you to put 'your face' in the game, but the end result is laughable. Career mode throws up likeable moments, like rival fights and Pay-Per-View appearances, but otherwise the experience is vanilla, with too much focus placed on tiresome mini-games. Online's also disappointing, with most



An impressive mixture of 50 boxing legends and nearly-men who, for the most part, play true to life. Mike Tyson has near-lethal close punching, Manny Pacquiao's mix of speed and precision make him a thrill to control, and Muhammad Ali is practically unbeatable. But the lesser fighters feel generic, watering down the overall experience.



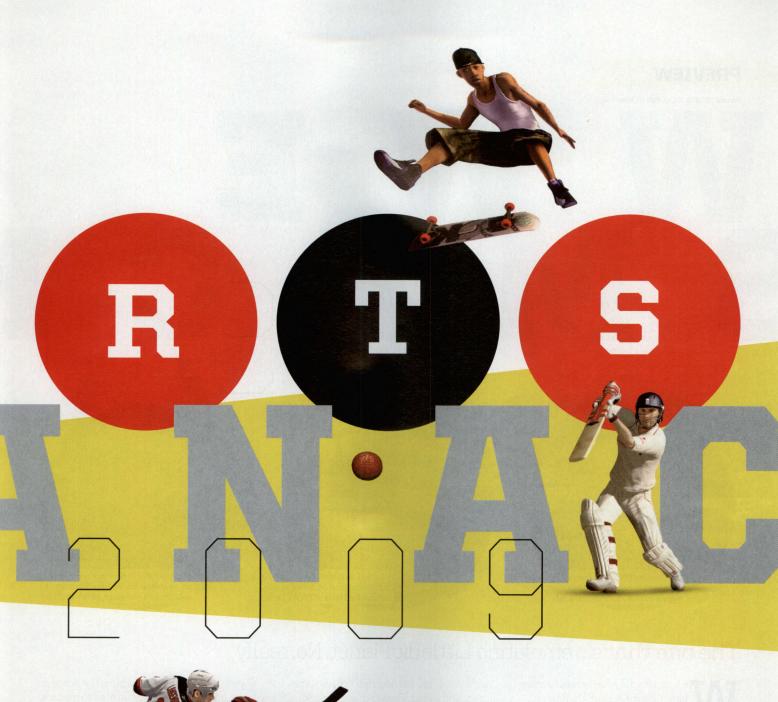
Pacquiao and Hatton both play like their real selves.







feature Sports almanac



Killer tactics, beloved classics, and insider info on the best new games: all in your giant guide to PS3 sports...





PREVIEW

Format PS3 ETA 23 Oct Pub THO Dev Yuke's







Mysterio! All his new tats are in, and his new open-backed mask makes its debut too. Super quick, so fun to play.

The one that's... emulating LittleBigPlanet. No, really

e're billing the new Smackdown as wrestling meets LittleBigPlanet. And it's not because we've lost the run of ourselves. The latest instalment in THQ's big-name grap game is all about user-generated content: specifically, creating and sharing your own home-made wrestlers and storylines. It's going to be colossal. But to explain why, we need to retrace our steps to last year's game.

Smackdown vs Raw 2009 replaced the series' gradually waning Season mode with something called Road To WrestleMania. The new mode contained six storylines where you got to be one specific wrestler for the three months building up to WWE's marquee payper-view event, WrestleMania. As well as play

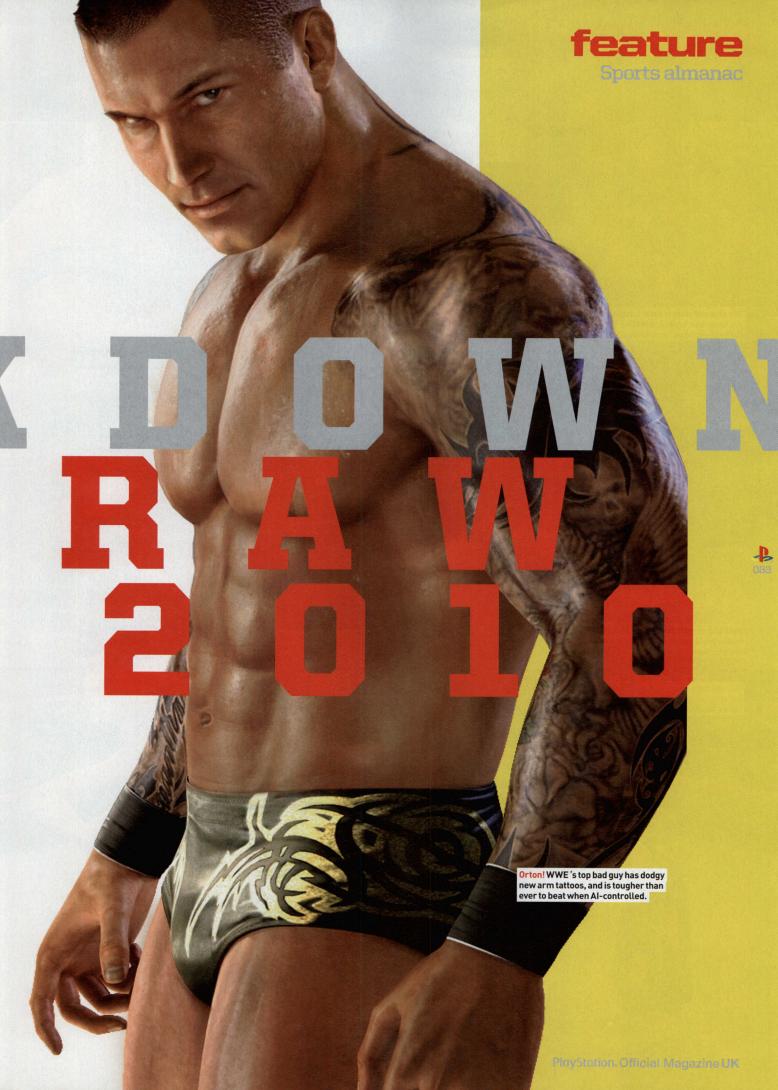
out matches, you participated in backstage angles, and were forced to make specific choices that affected the narrative – like choosing which wrestler to unleash revenge upon after being attacked by a masked man. It was a fantastic method of immersing you in the often ridiculous storylines seen on WWE TV, that went down a storm with fans on the net – and with us, too.

Get your pen out

For Smackdown vs Raw 2010, Road To WrestleMania is back. But more importantly, it's been supplemented by a similar mode in which you can step into the role of developer, writer and publisher by creating your own WWE storylines, then uploading them for

anyone else in the world to play. The scope is huge, particularly as you can also share up to 50 created wrestlers, an increase of 20 over previous games in the series. So if you want to construct a storyline in which WWE is invaded by rivals TNA, or even UFC – spearheaded by former WWE champ Brock Lesnar – you have every tool needed to do so. Or you can just wait for someone else to do the hard work, then just download and play.

Proud of our laziness, we initially thought the latter would be our preference... until we tried the storyline creator for ourselves. Turns out it's tons of fun. To build a specific scene, a tidy overlay presents you with a selection of environments and animations to choose from, as well as access to every character







"Undertaker in a white top and blue bottoms? Niiiiice."

in the game, right down to commentators and a WWE doctor. The scene plays out behind the overlay, updating each time you change an element – so switch a talking character from Chris Jericho to Kofi Kingston and it'll automatically, and almost instantly, be replicated. Lines of text can be input via joypad or USB keyboard, so you can make wrestlers chat or argue, or even have Jim Ross commentate on what's happening.

In 20 minutes we'd created a basic fourscene story in which Triple H had taken over WWE and ordered certain superstars taken out. Undertaker was run over by a car; Rey Mysterio given a savage backstage beating by Jericho. But ultimately Edge, John Cena and



Team talk

There's a palpable excitement about his year's game, much more than he previous ones, just because of hat ability to share your experience. Everyone's version of the game is joing to be different."

Tryan Williams

Treative manager, THO

John Morrison came together to defeat Triple H and cohort Randy Orton and wrestle back control. We threw some hilarious gags in too, but you probably had to be there.

Granted, our hastily cobbled together angle isn't going to get us a writing job with WWE any time soon, but it was a delicious taster of what the dedicated will create once they get to work. Storylines can run for up to ten in-game years, subject to how much space you have available – the maximum length is 50 scenes and 500 matches – so you can bet there'll be hundreds of user-generated ones to play before Christmas.

Get in gear

One other new feature we absolutely love is Superstar Threads, which enables you to create three new outfits for each wrestler in the game. Essentially it's PS3 painting by numbers: take Rey Mysterio, and then tweak different areas of his outfit (boots, trousers, each half of his mask) to any colour you want. No WWE superstar wears the same outfit

every night, so it's a welcome step towards emulating reality, and it's also great fun to mess around in. Undertaker in a white vest top and blue bottoms? Nijijiice.

In what some may consider bad news, however, the long-rumoured switch to the UFC 2009: Undisputed engine (a title also developed in tandem by THQ and Yuke's hasn't happened. But we'll shed no tears, as Smackdown vs Raw 2009 featured the most advanced wrestling engine this series has ever seen, so only minor in-ring refinements is good news. Wrestlers now earn signature moves when their momentum meter is 75% full, so if you're playing as Triple H you can hit his spinebuster in the build up to nailing his finisher (the pedigree). Last year, stupefyingly, it was the other way round. New animations particularly pinfalls - and recaptured moves are evident everywhere, giving the game a fresh feel, even though it's similar to last year's under the hood.

After an extended hands-on, we're impressed with everything about this year's Smackdown – and that's without any of the user-generated content that should make it truly special. Roll on 23 October.

TRIVIA This is the 11th game in the Smackdown series – and it could be the last. Wrestling industry insiders claim THQ's contract with WWE is up for renewal, and that no deal has yet been struck.



HOW TO..

Score a double ton in Ashes Cricket 2009

Notch up 200 runs, even if your name is Ravi Bopara

Suffering from Ashes withdrawal symptoms? The series lives on via your PS3, where

you can win matches without having to change your boxers on the hour, every hour. Here are the keys to turning the England men into double centurions...

Play yourself in

☐ In real life, every young cricketer is taught to take some time to get himself 'set' at the crease, but videogames have often encouraged you to go in swinging. Not this one. Start wildly waving your willow during your man's first over and you'll only succeed in giving the slips catching practise. Leaving balls and playing defensive shots is crucial to building your batsman's confidence. Once

he's seen around 15-20 balls, you can start playing more elaborate strokes like cuts and pulls. It'll test your patience to begin with, but if you want to succeed at test level it's the only way.

Punish bad bowling

Once your batsman has a bit of confidence about him, it's tempting to attack every ball. It's also lunacy. If there's one thing more infuriating than getting out for a duck, it's lobbing one to gully after you've spent more than an hour patiently building a decent score. Look to drive full tosses over the infield $(\downarrow + \bigcirc)$ and pull anything short for four $(\rightarrow + \bigcirc)$. If your opponent switches to a defensive field, then take quick singles $(\bigcirc) + \checkmark$ or \searrow to keep the runs slowly ticking over. Also watch out for

the opposition bowler's confidence bar turning yellow or red – it means he's ripe for a thumping.

Beware spin

So long as you don't do anything rash, it's easy to survive fast and swing bowling. Spinners are a little tougher to deal with. The simplest way to cope with them is to leave anything that's aimed a safe distance outside of the stumps. For straighter balls, play a defensive shot; for anything on the leg side, flick it away for a single (②+7). If you're in charge of an aggressive player like Pietersen or Andrew Flintoff, then you can try to loft fuller balls towards gaps in the field, but your timing has to be perfect. Most importantly of all: don't forget to slap yourself on the back once you reach the big 200.

PREVIEW

Format PS3 ETA Feb 2010 Pub Sega Dev Eurocom

Vancouver 2010

The one that's... moved on from button-bashing

h, the good old Olympic tie-in game. While representatives from across the globe strain their hammies, biceps and tendons to the absolute limit, you're sat at home doing the very same... to your fingers and thumbs. The genre's been all about button-bashing since the days of 1983 arcade release Track & Field, but now developer Eurocom is trying to change all that.

For the official game of next February's Winter Olympics, the team plans to completely reinvent the way each event is controlled. "Vancouver 2010 will set a new standard for the Olympic-themed videogames genre,"

says Eurocom director Hugh Binns, and in an attempt to prove it we were given some handson time with the Men's Individual Large Hill (yes!) event – one of 14 in the final game.

The mountains look lovely, and the blur effect on the outside of our man's goggles (you play from a first-person perspective) and sense of speed added to the realism. The controls, although simple, were a welcome break from the norm – press ② at the correct time to push off, dictate jump angle, jump, and finally land, and ② and ③ to balance in the air. It's a mildly promising start. If we can play the bobsleigh event as Jamaica, we're sold. Maybe.

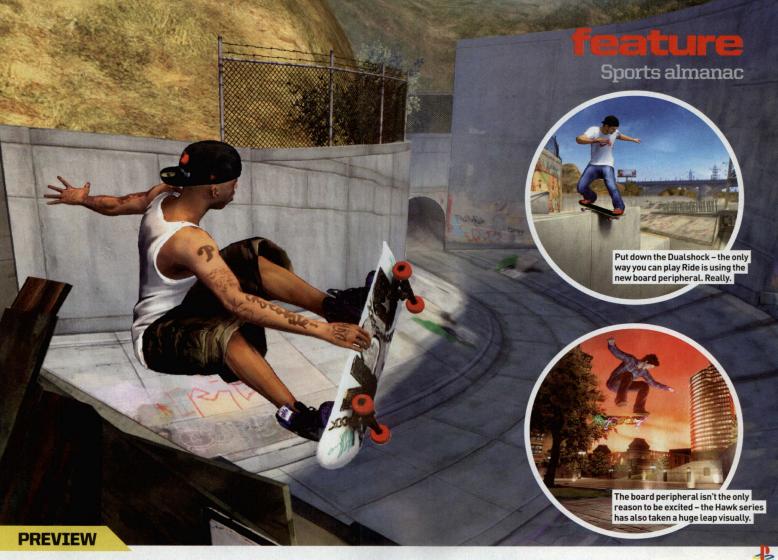


SPORTING CLASSIC



Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament

Format PS2 Released 2002 Pub Namco Dev Namco USP The one tennis game that puts substance over style. 'The greatest tennis game ever made? My answer may surprise you, because I adore Virtua Tennis. But Sega's racquet-swinging silliness has been outplayed. Seven years after release, Smash Court Tennis: Pro Tournament still plays the most realistic game around, thanks to a weighty, timing-based control system that just feels authentic next to Virtua's OTT smashfest and Top Spin's slightly clunky movement. In no other game can you so closely emulate the tactics of real players, be they serve and volley, cross-court drives or big passing shots. Okay, it only has eight players, but two of those are in-their-heyday recreations of Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi. And one is Anna 'Yes Please' Kournikova. Our predecessor called it tennis's answer to PES, and that description still stands today." Ben Wilson



Format PS3 ETA 20 Nov Pub Activision Dev Robomodo

Tony Hawk Ride The one that's... as real as it gets

t was only a matter of time. After ten years and nine games the Tony Hawk series was running on empty. When EA came along with Skate's instinctive analogue control system, Hawk's bazillion-point-combo button tango started to look even older than Madonna's arms. So ditching the series as we know it and reinventing it around an actual skateboard seems like a natural progression.

Instead of tapping buttons, Tony Hawk: Ride lets you pull tricks by moving around on a new skateboard peripheral packed full of accelerometers to measure what you're doing. It's as close to real skating as you can get without actually hitting a halfpipe. Developer Robomodo has spent ages



Team talk

"It's only [playable on] the board. That decision was made early on. We've seen a lot of games that try to be everything to all controllers and it ends up compromised. You have to commit to the board because it's the only way of making it feel good."

Joshua Tsui, President, Robomodo

studying how real skaters execute tricks and adapted the motions. President Joshua Tsui says, "The gestures are really easy to pull off. They're not the way skaters really do their moves, but it's a step towards real skating."

Best foot forward

To perform an ollie you tilt the board up and down quickly, a kick flip can be pulled by tilting up and to one side, and manuals involve titling and balancing exactly as you would in real life. Even moving around mirrors reality: sweep your foot past the board as if you're kicking off on a real skateboard and infra-red sensors detect the movement, moving you onscreen. The same sensors also recognise when you hold the board, enabling you to perform grab tricks. In total there are over 75 tricks and a Style Meter, which you can power up by completing combos in order to pull off special moves. Fortunately, there's a difficulty level to suit anyone. At its highest, you'll be all but skating as you pull actual 360s by spinning around on the board, say. But the less agile

needn't worry – there's a Casual mode where you don't even have to steer. Instead you're guided around the track and simply trigger tricks at the right moment with tilts and leans.

Ride is 'board only' - there's no controller option. Because of this, gameplay has been designed around shortened skating sessions that you can drop into, rather than exploring a city looking for events. Levels include areas like Venice Beach and the LA River, along with events like Vans Downtown Showdown. Each can be skated in different modes: Speed is a straightforward race through an area; Challenge involves completing certain trick in specific spots; Trick mode is all about pulling off the best moves; and Vert sees you competing for points in a halfpipe. And, finally, to ensure you don't wobble around like an idiot on your own, there's four-player online and a Hotseat mode where one group can take turns on the same board. After you...

TRIVIA The final prototype board that developer Robomodo presented to Activision was made from various parts of a Dualshock, Wii-mote and 360 controller.



Format PS3 ETA 23 Oct Pub Konami Dev Konami

PES 2010

The one that's... fixed Master League at long, long last

mazing news. Pro Evo is fixed! Alright, so it's not quite perfect yet... but it's already come on leaps and bounds since our hands-on last month, in which we had big doubts about the new engine, which seemed to offer little in the way of genuine innovation. Kudos to Konami: that's now changed. First up, 360° player movement, the big addition to FIFA this year, has also made it into PES 2010 and it's a huge inclusion. It's almost completely eliminated the on-rails feel to players that's haunted the series since its move to PS3, instead making your boys feel weighty and natural. Removing the unwieldy



Team talk

"Master League has attained more reality and greater longevity. Of course, UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League make a great deal of difference. The new game will more than meet your expectations."

Tatsuya Tanaka

handling we specifically criticised last issue in the process. Good stuff.

In a directly related note, an individual's momentum now affects his movement more than ever before. Keep your finger glued to the sprint button and you can overrun a loose ball or an onrushing forward – especially risky when you're in control of the last defender. At the other end of the pitch, crossing and heading feels just right. Factor in crisper long-range shooting – our best goal so far is a Park Ji-Sung screamer in the Korean derby (yes, really) which arrowed into the top corner from 30 yards – and you should find yourself hitting the onion bag far more often than last year. For now, we'll count that as a positive.

The big news off the field is that North Korea, Uzbekistan and Iraq all make their PES debuts this year... nah, we kid. All three nations are in the game, but we've got something even bigger to report. Master League has been completely revamped, and now incorporates real money,

qualification for the Europa and Champions Leagues, and a separate youth team full of players for you to develop. Disappointingly, the latter contains the same generic youngsters no matter which club you control, but otherwise these are definite steps forward.

In a big plus, the ability to attract players is directly affected by the competitions your club is competing in. In last year's game it was nigh-on impossible to attract stars like Torres and Ronaldo, no matter how many titles you won. Now, if you're playing the Champions League, they're far more likely to sign. Factor in a bigger focus towards online – with improved servers and the ability to play in the Champions League against your mates – and suddenly, it seems as though PES could be set for a big season after all. Great news. Especially if you're one of our two Iraqi subscribers.

TRIVIA As well as the new national sides listed, PES 2010 will be the first game in the series to feature four licensed Scottish teams: Rangers, Celtic, Hearts and Aberdeen.



HOW TO...

Score with every free kick you take in FIFA 10

Alright, nearly every free kick. Not even Ronaldo nails them all...

The usual routine for taking FIFA 10 free kicks goes like this: a) Remember being able to score on FIFA 99 when the game had giant arrows; b) Decide to have a crack on goal; c) Hit ball wildly into crowd. But no longer. Because we've made this guide to smashing them in from (almost) anywhere...

Close-range

L We're talking edge of the box and maybe ten yards outside – 18 to just under 30 yards. Choose the player with the best combo of curve and accuracy stats (Beckham, Henry, and Giggs are good, if obvious, examples). Now all you need is the right power and a bit of curl. Aim the camera with the left stick so the empty side of the goal is centre screen, charge the bar between a third and a half and hold a direction to swerve the ball. Bang.

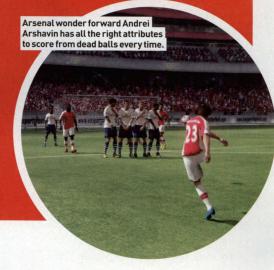
☐ From range

From anywhere outside the 30-yard mark you'll need a different approach.
Forget placing it – give it a wallop with a driven shot instead. Hold shoot and charge the bar just under half, with the camera lined up as before. Players with high shot power (like Ronaldo and Lamps) are the men you want here – arrowing the ball into the net.

☐ The cheeky one

As an alternative, try perfecting this diversionary set-piece, which is good from long-range or closer to the box. Hold 12 to call a second player to the ball, and keep holding it as you press — your second man will give a short square pass, which will roll into space in the centre of the pitch. The trick is to have an absolute thumper running on to

the loose ball – a Steven Gerrard or Michael Essien – who should have the time and space to unleash an unstoppable monster into the top corner.





HOW TO...

Beat Lesnar online in UFC 2009: Undisputed

Everyone picks him. Now you can beat everyone

Frank Mir's great striking abilities make him a great opponent for Big Brock.

The popularity of Ultimate Fighting Championship has gone through the roof

since former WWE man Brock
Lesnar smashed Frank Mir at UFC 100 in
July to raise the Heavyweight Championship.
The downside is that ever since then, every
second player wants to be super-powerful
bad guy Lesnar in online matches. The best
way to get round it? Pound them every time
with this handy guide...

Know the fighters

L Picking a character is almost as important as what you actually end up doing in the ring. Lesnar is hugely powerful and a great wrestler, but other players tend to be extra-aggressive with him – meaning he

tires quickly, particularly when facing someone with superior body strikes like Mir or Tim Sylvia. When the fight gets underway, let your opponent set the pace initially, and simply play a blocking game mixed with kicks to the legs and midriff.

Don't get mounted

This is really, really important. Just like in real life, Lesnar will batter you into unconsciousness fast if you let him get on top of you – so it's best to avoid the ground game entirely for at least the first two rounds. If you manage to knock him off his feet then pepper him with kicks, but resist the temptation to mount him; one transition in his favour can easily mean the end for your boy. Constantly remind yourself that the best route to victory is to keep him tired by

attacking the body from a standing position, but be careful not to get too predictable.

 \bigcirc Get the tapout

If you've got to a third round with Lesnar, well done. Now's the time to start pressing for the victory, but take stock of what's already happened in the fight. If you feel like you've had the advantage throughout, don't throw away a certain scorecard victory by getting KOd or submitted. If it's been close or you've taken a battering, then look to end it via tapout. Wait for your opponent to miss a big punch, counter with a takedown, then go for the submission (R3, then rotate the right stick) immediately. It's very rare to find anyone online who plays defensively as Lesnar, so this tactic works surprisingly effectively. Job done.



PREVIEW

Format PS3 ETA 2010 Pub EA Dev EA Tiburon

EA MMA

The one that's... beaten UFC president Dana White

Last month OPM revealed that EA's upcoming MMA game was under threat after UFC president Dana White insisted that anyone who appeared in it would never be part of his organisation. In response, EA has begun to drip-feed the names of fighters who are confirmed for its game, and the first is monumental. Russian beast Fedor Emelianenko is the sport's biggest name outside of UFC, and the one mixed martial arts superstar who's constantly eluded White's advances making his signing a huge coup for EA, and giving their project instant credibility.

"We couldn't be more delighted to announce Fedor as part of the team," says EA Sports president Peter Moore. "His commitment to our product underlines how serious we are about continuing to invest in building this franchise." That seriousness extends to signing five-time UFC champion

Randy Couture as the face of EA MMA, which will involve both appearing on its cover and promoting it across the globe. It's a massive blow to White, as after a contract dispute Couture recently returned to UFC on his own terms – which clearly included appearing

in EA's game, rather then the THQcreated UFC Undisputed 2009.

Five others confirmed are Strikeforce's Cung Le and Renato Sobral, former UFC heavyweight champ Tim Sylvia, plus Gegard Mousasi and Jay Hieron. A fight industry source tells us that 15-year vet Frank Shamrock and Gina Carano –

recently voted the 16th hottest woman in the world – are also in. So while White might not like it, EA MMA is happening. "We are now in our second year of development, market planning and licensing execution," says Moore. "We look forward to contributing to the global growth of mixed martial arts."



Jonah Lomu Rugby

Format PS1 Released 1997 Pub Codemasters Dev Rage USP Comedically huge hits and ridiculously jacked up players. "You'll often hear so-called experts complaining that 'there's never been a good rugby console game'. It's absolute rubbish. Back in the day, when Codemasters were among the leading lights in sports (classic Mega Drive era Brian Lara Cricket has still never been bettered, in my humble opinion), the boys of Leamington Spa unleashed Jonah Lomu Rugby on PS1. It contained a stack of game modes, 20-something national teams (including - yeah! - Chinese Taipei), and arcadey gameplay where big cartoony players ran through one another to score try after try. Now it'd be slammed for lacking realism, but back then it worked simply because it was fun and funny. Who can forget massive New Zealand winger Jonah's special ability to run through every player in an entire team just by holding 2? Magnificent."

David Boddington

Sports almanac

PREVIEW

Format PS3 ETA 6 Oct Pub EA Dev EA Canada

BA Live 10

The one that's... all about lookin' good

t may not seem like a big deal to some people when a guy like LeBron [James] is missing some tattoos and his away-colour signature Nikes, but to our core audience this isn't authentic. It breaks the reality of sim sports titles when details like that are missed. Not this year." That's the view of NBA Live 10's Visual Games Designer Ryan Santos, who says the new edition of the 15-year-old basketball veteran is all about the finer visual details: "Things like updating tattoos, having the freshest player exclusive shoes. We're also bringing back a grip of NBA throwback and holiday/cultural jerseys. When you boot up NBA Live 10, it'll look like a completely new game, where players and stadiums will look as authentic as ever."

That'd all be well and good were it not for the fact that the NBA Live games have consistently underwhelmed since making the leap to PS3 - and it's been little to do with aesthetics. Instead, a focus on gimmicks with ridiculous names like Defensive Lockdown Control and Quickstrike Ankle Breakers has removed any hope of authenticity in the only area that matters: out on the court. Last year's game encouraged you to get into scoring positions by utilising tricks and dekes with individual players, instead of working opportunities using passing and positioning. Bad, bad, bad.



Team talk

huge focus for us this year was make NBA Live more culturally

ual Games Designer, EA Canada



Will that change this year? Jury's out. While the developer crows over the upgraded visuals, it's been reticent when it comes to discussing gameplay improvements. Issues from last year, like refs ignoring players who step out of bounds and the Al making nonsense subs, are gone - but we'll need more than a set of bug fixes to convince us that Live is back to its best.

TRIVIA As of 1 September of this year there had been 15 basketball games released on PS3, more than any other sport... but only six of them made it to the UK.

IMPORT

Format PS3 ETA Japan import Pub Konami Dev Konami

Baseball Spirits 6

The one that's... big in Japan

or a sport that's seen precisely zero games released in the UK in the last seven years (the last was Acclaim's All-Star Baseball 2002 on PS2), you'd be forgiven for thinking baseball had nothing to offer your PS3. In fact, the opposite is true. MLB 09: The Show is astonishing (see right), while over the last couple of years Konami's Professional Baseball Spirits series has overtaken PES as Japan's most beloved sports title.

This popularity is mainly thanks to a control system that's all about simplicity, and harks back to arcade baseball games of the '90s. Batting is as easy as moving a bat-shaped

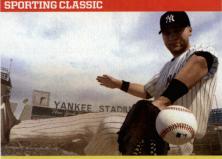
cursor around the strike zone, then trying to time your swing for exactly when the ball arrives. It's completely different to the contextual mechanic found in The Show, yet still just as satisfying when you belt a homer.

Interest has piqued this year because PBS6 is the first ever game to feature the World Baseball Classic. This event is the only time when national sides go head-to-head, and so sees the PBS debut of big-name foreigners like USA's Kevin Youkilis and Derek Jeter. Worth buying, then? Find out in next month's review.

TRIVIA It's not just OPM who heart The Show-it's the highest ranked sports game on Metacritic, with an average score of 90.



SPORTING CLASSIC



MLB 09: The Show

Format PS3 Released 2009 Pub Sony Dev SCEA San Diego USP The most authentic sports game ever made

"The first time I heard about MLB: The Show was shortly after I joined OPM as reviews editor. Deputy editor Ben - who sat opposite me at the time - was constantly raving about 'this amazing baseball game' that he wanted to give 9/10 (cue Homer scream), and in the build-up to the review he'd regularly lean over his monitor to tell me about the latest feature to be added to the game ('Custom soundtracks played over the stadium PA system!'). Course, I thought he was nuts, until I actually played the thing. As Ben reminds us all every chance he gets (even after giving this year's edition 10/10!), it's the realism and detail that really make it work: tiny bits of commentary recorded for a one-in-hundred occurrence; crowds slow-chanting the batter's name as he walks to the plate; cut-scenes of players and managers chatting and arguing in the dugout. FIFA or PES are both super playable, but can you imagine how incredible it'd be if they reached that level of authenticity? I can."

Nathan Ditum



Format PS3 ETA US import Pub EA Dev EA Tiburon

NCAA Football 10

The one that's... completely reinventing edit modes

here's nothing new in editing a team in PES or FIFA to be a carbon copy of the county/school/pub side you step out for every weekend. But it's always been a massive ball ache, as you stumble agonisingly through a cumbersome edit mode slowly updating every face, name, and piece of kit. Hopefully, those days are over, thanks to the developers of college gridiron game NCAA Football 2009. Got a PS3? Got a PC or Mac that connects to the internet? Then you're about to be part of a revolution.

NCAA's new Create-A-School feature allows you to build a team from scratch over the net using a PC or Mac, then simply import it once you've booted up the game on PS3. The step-by-step team creator couldn't be more user-friendly, either: you start by filling in the important details like stadium and team name, then advance through seven other tabs (logo, stadium, field, uniform, mascot, program, and roster) tweaking and tinkering until your team is complete.

The mode is as deep as you want to make it. If you just want to be part of a fictional team you can choose a ready-made logo and kit, select the option to fill the roster with made-up player names, add yourself as a QB and be ready to go. We wanted a bit more than that though, and so set about creating an OPM team to rival that of our college football heroes – the Odessa Permian Panthers from tear-inducing sports flick Friday Night Lights.

Crest creation

The first step was to import the OPM logo, simply by going to the Logo tab, hitting the comically big Upload Logo button, and selecting it as a JPG file. Putting together our uniforms was the next important step. Wanting to stand out, we went for a fetching combo of retina-burning magenta and luminous green. With two helmets (home, away) and four kits (home, away, home alt and away alt), all with numerous customisation options, there's huge scope to get lost in kit

tweaking for hours. We got our home one sorted and then stuck with the kits autogenerated by our colour choices.

The highlight of creating a team is filling out the roster. Names, details like height and weight, player faces and every attribute can be edited quickly on the same screen – simply select a player's name on a list on the left-side of your browser, and all his details pop up immediately on the right. It took us 20 minutes to have Team OPM input and ready to roll.

Next it was simply a case of loading up the game on PS3, selecting the Teambuilder option, and downloading our team. You can also select other creators' sides if you so wish – most NFL teams have been faithfully recreated, as well as UK footy sides, baseball teams like Boston Red Sox, and pretty much any other sports-related organisation you can think of. Pick a subject, search for it, and someone out there has already made it.

So how did the OPM Colts do? First game against the Texas Tech Aggies was a tight 17-14 win, with QB Timmy Clark throwing touchdowns to receivers Stevie Gallagher and Mark Wynne. Our dream match with the Panthers was even closer, decided by a three-yard TD run by fullback Nathan Ditum in the dying seconds. Like in the movie, Odessa had their hearts broken. But this time, our tears were ones of guilt. Alright, and victory.

PLAYER STAYS

PRESHMAN (RS) 61-225 LBS

JAY DITUM

OFFI COLTS

RECEIVINGE

REC

TRIVIA It's the official game of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, yet NCAA 10 doesn't contain one real player name.

HOW TO...

Never get KOd in Fight Night Round 4

The surefire way to prevent yourself chewing mat

Aside from its incredible visuals, the best thing about new Fight Night is that its engine adheres to common sense. Use the same approach as a real boxer and, even if this is your first ever outing in the virtual ring, you'll master it in a matter of days. Here's your three-step guide to building an undefeated streak to match Rocky Marciano's...

Forget the big KO

L Spamming haymakers will occasionally earn you the instant finish you're desperate for. More often, it'll get you beat as your opponent waits for you to tire, then peppers you until you're too broken to stand. Instead, know that the counter punch is the most effective move in the game. Stay patient through the first four rounds, looking for patterns in your opponent's offence, and try

to catch him with a single punch just after he's had a big swing. Not only will you stay healthy, it'll test his patience – and if he starts getting wild you'll be all set to pick him off.

Keep moving

Muhammad Ali's almost uncatchable footwork set him apart from every boxer ever. But even if you're playing as someone a bit more doughy above the hips (hi Lennox!) remembering to duck, weave and move can produce Ali-calibre results. Lean in, aim body shots, then get out of dodge for 15 seconds. Do it again. Now again. While your opponent's head won't be covered in cuts, he won't be able to keep up with you later in the fight with tired legs and a battered torso. It's in the later rounds, against a weary opponent, that you can afford to go for the big

haymaker. And even if you don't get it, you should be ahead on the judges' cards.

With the help of our in-ring guide, you'll never get beat again. Unlike poor Ricky.

🔾 Have a game plan

The two pieces of advice above are uncannily successful – try them across ten boxers in different weight classes and you should see consistent success. But it's crucial that you stick to the script if things don't go as planned. Get knocked down by a lucky uppercut? Don't panic. Charging at your opponent in order to exact revenge won't win you the fight. More importantly, don't get overexcited when you knock your opponent down. It's tempting at that point to go for the big finale, but this opens yourself up for those deadly counter punches we mentioned earlier. Stick to your plan and you'll avoid a KO and pick up the W.



Everybody's Golf: World Tour

Format PS3 Released 2008 Pub Sony Dev SCEJ USP Cartoony golfers, colourful courses, loads of laughs. "Without wanting to conform to any obviously effeminate stereotypes, sports games aren't normally my thing. I'd much rather be blowing the heads off huge uglier-than-sin-itself aliens than playing with virtual balls. But that all changed the day that someone slipped Everybody's Golf: World Tour into the office PS3 and we all took our turns to tee off. I loved it, especially the swollen headed anime characters and the deliriously happy little musical notes that played when I'd made a perfect swing. And the more you play, the more you realise that underneath all the cuteness are some serious physics and punishing courses, and that's when you're hooked. Seriously... who wants to be boring Tiger Woods when you can play a few rounds as sackboy instead?'

Rachel Penny

PREVIEW

Format PS3 ETA 15 Sep Pub Take Two Dev Visual Concepts

MHT 5KTO

The one that's... trying to be Facebook for sports

Twitter, Facebook, NHL 2K10, Myspace... sorry, what? The big news out of 2K is that it wants its puck pusher to tap into social networking, with a new bespoke website coming to upload all your franchise scores and stats and compare them with other users. It doesn't sound like it'll have quite the same widespread appeal as, say, Twitter... but maybe we're just really underestimating the global love of hockey.

Joking aside, the bigger focus online can only be a good thing, particularly as you'll now be able to share user-made draft classes – pools of players who'll join your franchise at the end of any season. "So, if you want to re-create

next year's draft, you can do that and share it with people," says producer Ben Bishop. "Or maybe you want to go back and create one of the more exciting draft classes from past years." It's a strong idea – imagine being able to download a file of 100 past footballing greats to add to your FIFA season.

On the ice, hits are bigger, players can now shoot while stumbling, and there's a new, naughty 'stick lift' button. Nice, if non-essential, additions. Still... let's hope that 2K isn't pinning all its hopes on the social networking thing.

TRIVIA Back in the days when Sega still made consoles, NHL 2K2 was the first ever game released on Dreamcast in the USA.











back issues

Feed your obsession



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- God Of War III
- Kaz Hirai interview



Issue #029 March 2009

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- inFamous
- Street Fighter IV



Issue #030 April 2009

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Back issues

Late to the party? There's no need to miss out...



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The OPM review setup



Our review code is tested on hi-def and standard-de TVs to ensure we know how games perform at both ends of the scale. Our HD setup is a 70" Sony Bravia with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

PlayStation Official Magazine - UK

Official Magazine - UK

Your essential guide to every new release

R eviewing sports games is hard. As well as trying to avoid knee-jerk reactions to losing close games against colleagues - "Ref, offside! This is balls, man. 6/10" - you also have to negotiate the tricky getting-to-know process of playing any updated version of a game you've come to love. It's like if you sent your lady to be worked on in a special prettymaking factory every October, then had to get used to the new bits when she got back. Sort of. So FIFA 10's incredible 360° dribbling, for example, has been hailed at various points during the month as both a game-breaking disaster and the future of digital football. In the end, we settled on the latter – see why the game is a belter in our exclusive review over the page.

That's not our only exclusive this month. We've also got the brilliant rally sequel Colin McRae Dirt 2, and IO's cutesy Hitman for kids (kinda) Mini Ninjas. Then there's surprisingly ace WW2 flier IL-2 Sturmovik, equally surprisingly not-rubbish shooter Wolfenstein, the ever-improving Madden NFL 10, and more. Not balls, then. Man.



FIFA 10

The big innovation is 360° dribbling, but we're also excited about shots that go in from outside the area and the fact that little Theo Walcott's really, really fast.



MINI NINJAS

Free cursed wildlife and use your giant ninja hat as a boat? This might be the cutest game of the year. As a result Rach is homing in on the Platinum Trophy...



COLIN MCRAE DIRT 2

Loud, grimy rally action from Codemasters' consistently brilliant race team. Is it the best racer on PS3? Quite possibly. The muddiest? Hell yes.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

Outstanding

Highly recommended, and ar investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite roor

for improvement. Rent it first

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

Agame that is both fun and

frustrating in equal measure Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.

GOLD AWARD PlayStation

Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and profound appeal.

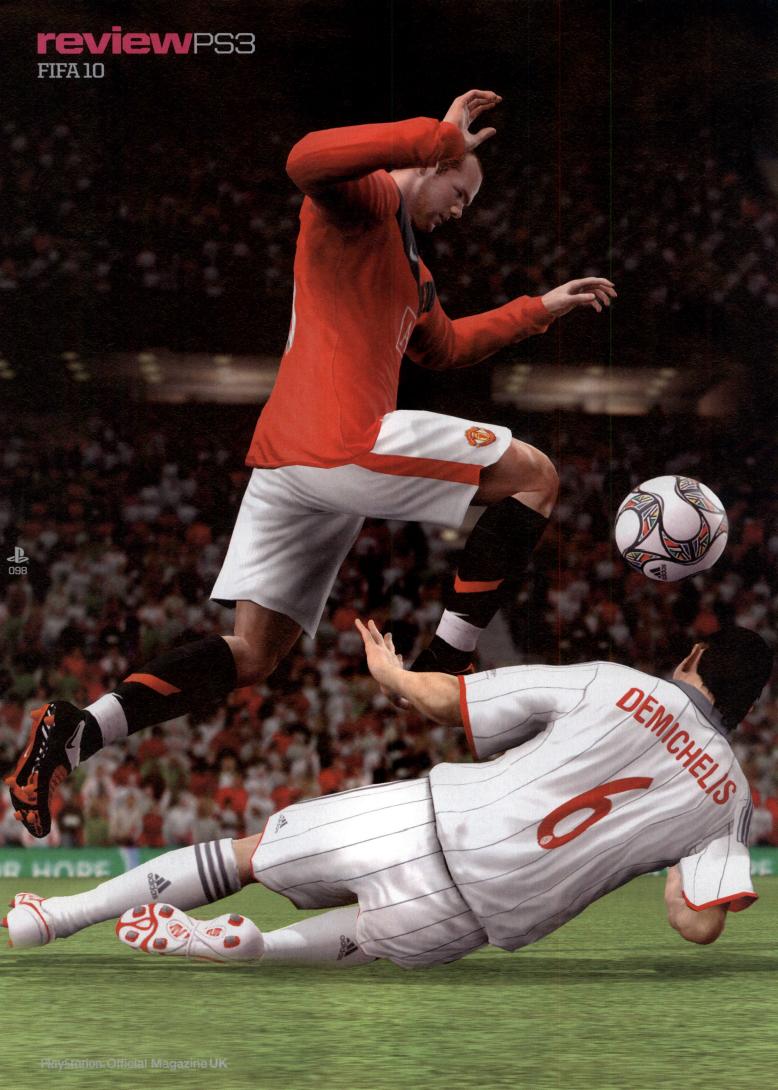




Table topper

FIFA 10

EA's football giant inches towards perfection

IFA has become the best football game on PS3 – because that's what it is, let's not dance around the truth – by virtue of patience. Patience, plus mountains of dollar to pay for a revolutionary next-gen engine and an army of developers to keep it ticking over. [And, yes, those many, many licences.]

This isn't the same feet-stamping series we got used to not playing on PS2, that tried to hide its gameplay deficiencies with shiny cover stars and soundbite features (Off The Ball! First Touch!) like the spoilt girl at the party with a tight dress and nothing to talk about the morning after. Small, insightful updates have characterised the rise of FIFA on PS3, from fairly bland beginnings in FIFA 08 to last year's nimble pay-off. And the same is true here - having established an advanced technological foundation. EA is wisely refining rather than revolutionising its game, and the results this year are, unsurprisingly, the best yet.



The first thing you'll notice is the new 360° dribbling. Ironically, it sounds a lot like one of those boastful gimmicks from FIFA's past, but there's more here than posturing. It's a natural extension of the philosophy behind the new engine, of bringing greater authenticity and physical realism to the game. (It does seem extraordinary to have a football game capable of calculating the swerve and spin of the ball depending on the speed it's travelling and the point at which it makes contact with the player's boot, when that player can only run in eight directions – as was the case last year.)

Total football

So, it's a natural step forward. The big question, though, is how does it effect gameplay? The answer is that it makes FIFA more demanding, but ultimately more rewarding. Without realising it, you'll have grown comfortable with using the eight-way axis of traditional footie

games as a crutch – knowing that you can run it up the line by pointing your man roughly in the direction of the opposite goal, or lining up a shot by cutting across the defender diagonally at just the right moment. Not any more. Now if you're hugging the touchline and don't pay close attention to what you're doing, you'll nudge the stick a fraction this way or that and edge over the line. And beating defenders is more about timing your turns and using your pace than zig-zagging on an invisible grid.

It takes a little time to get used to – you'll make mistakes you simply weren't able to make before – but the end result is another level of freedom and fluidity on top of FIFA's already superior gameplay. Play as a team with an absolute flyer like Theo Walcott and you'll find that even the slightest changes of angle allow you to glide past defenders. Choose any player and you can now squeeze into gaps between opposition players, and make

099

Five stars of the show



ANDREI ARSHAVIN

The Russian's great for the skilled dribble (hold 12 for quick turns and lighter touches) thanks to excellent technique mixed with the strength to hold off tacklers.



DAVID BECKHAM

Crossfield passes are now harde and less likely to be intercepted, so players who love to spray the ball around like Becks are made even more effective.



STEVEN GERRARD

Stevie G's been powering home long-range shots for England and Liverpool for nearly a decade – FIFA 10's punchy drives mean he can now do the same in the game.



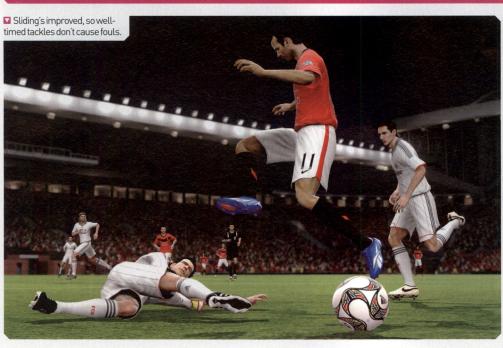
NEMANJA VIDIC

The Man U enforcer is perfect for exploiting the depth in the physical side of the game – jostling for the ball, and making extra-long land more accurate) sliding tackles.



THEO WALCOTT

Get a shoulder across him and little Theo is weak like a reed, but in the clear he glides across the turf, angling away from defenders with the new directional controls



turns and arcing runs that just weren't possible before. There's plenty of room for oversteering, or just missing the right running angle, or turning your man too far and killing your momentum, but that's because you are in control. It's worth it for the extra possibilities it presents.

Opening up space within FIFA like this has a knock-on effect – other areas of the game have clearly been updated to



complement and keep up with the new movement. This is most noticeable in the contact between players, which has a natural but meaty feel to it. Last year's challenges were no disaster, but they felt limited compared to the updated system. Entering contact now feels like a proper tussle: go shoulder to shoulder with another player down the line and you can actually see the back and forth as speed, weight and strength all play a part in deciding the outcome. You still play a part too, of course - dragging your player out of the challenge if you're pacier than you're opponent, or hammering jostle - 12 - to work up some elbow room if you have the physical edge.

It's not just shoulder-toshoulder challenges. Jumps for headers, niggly (or full-on wipeout) contact from slide tackles, clumsy midfield collisions and body checks – they all play out naturally depending on the players



It's well worth having a punt from outside the box this year − the shots really fly at goal.



■ The stadia have nice touches – half-full away ends and deep shadows for early kick-offs.

involved and the situation they're in. A desperate, ankle-tapping lunge from a defender might bring featherweight Aaron Lennon to the ground, but a rumbling number nine like Emile Heskey will stand a better chance of recovering and marching onwards to goal. Likewise, a strong runner like Steven Gerrard or

Wayne Rooney might blunder through some not-quite-timed stand-up challenges, while a Samir Nasri or Luka Modric could well find themselves sitting on their arse unexpectedly.

The best thing is the sense of skilled control that goes into deciding these moments. Being successful is a matter of timing, and knowing the strengths and weaknesses of who you're controlling (speeding away from tackles with Gareth Barry, it turns out, isn't really an option).

But it's also possible to push too hard and too far, and give away free kicks. Not just by sliding around like a lunatic, but also by thumping into a player with





when you're too far from the ball to make a legitimate challenge, or by simply blocking them off when they've moved the ball past you. This might not sound like incredible news - essentially, that you can foul people in new ways - but the key thing is the control you have over it. There's a single, continuous line running from 'clean tackle' to 'clattering disaster', rather than the black and white binary: 'win ball' or 'not win ball'. Depending on the context, the players, and your skill, it could be 'ball squirms loose' or 'attacker stumbles on' or 'marginal foul called'. It feels alive and full of possibilities.

Getting animated

A host of new animations make these and other interactions between players super-believable. It's another freedom thing - there are more ways in which they can move, so there are more things you can do with them. The most enjoyable animations are probably the tumblers - like the full-on head over heels following a horror tackle - but even in the relatively short time I've been playing I've seen things that are not only new, but actively alter the way the game plays. Like when I played as France and Patrice Evra jumped, semi-curled, in front of a winger putting a cross into the box, the ball slicing off his

■ Goalkeeper Al is much improved better reactions, but fewer impossisaves.



Little animations, like forwards pointing for a through ball and defenders raising arms, are ace.

torso and out for a corner. Or, in the same game, Karim Benzema launching himself ahead of three slow-reacting defenders, his body tilting sideways, one foot trailing on the floor with the other outstretched, to smash in a ball coming back off the post, before ending up in a heap in the net.

In fact, players seem more willing and able to slide and reach for balls generally - it's not that they either have the ball or don't, but that the ball is a real thing that they can catch and interact with. On one of the many occasions I found myself in the arena for no real reason, smashing home shots with Wayne Rooney, I stopped too close to the keeper on an approach to goal. Rooney lunged forward to toe-end the ball as it slipped away, and it slid under the keeper's diving body, scraping his arm on the way. On the replay I could see the



"Pass!" "I'm just gonna have a little go." "Pass!" "I can make it." "Pass!" "I should've passed."

backspin this put on the ball as it bounced on to the turf, carrying just enough momentum to squeeze over the line. It felt real and alive – like I could put the ball in places and through gaps that football games traditionally don't really have.

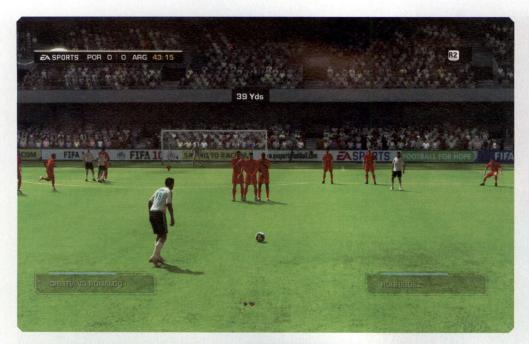
He shoots, he scores

So what does all this mean in the context of matches themselves? Well, build-up play is still the best thing about the game. Passing through the midfield was a huge highlight last year - taking a touch, turning, manoeuvring an angle, playing the short ball - and all the tweaks (plus the flatter, harder lofted long passes) simply enhance this already stellar part of the game. The standout moment of FIFA 10 for us in the office so far has been a lunchtime game of three-on-three. When we've played PES with six men in the past it's stretched the game to



reviewPS3

FIFA 10







☐ The new set-piece creator means you can build complex free kick routines. Or, you know, just belt it.

breaking point (odd AI decisions, wobbly physics), but FIFA 10 held up brilliantly. The action was end-to-end, but more importantly the interplay was incredible, each side passing and moving, using the 360° dribble to find space, jostling for the ball. The midfield was full of tidy triangles and the occasional, deadly-incisive through ball. Progressive is the only word for the football on show. The weight and pace of this part of the game is just extraordinary, even with several human players complicating the Al's job of running the game smoothly.

Crucially, play in the final third has been improved, too. Not that this area of FIFA 09 was awful, but scoring at all was tough and from range was particularly hard, while crossing had a weird voodoo to it (not helped by fudgey attacking headers). Now you can fizz in shots from range (with the right player of course midfield belters like Frank Lampard, Stevie G and Michael Ballack, or strikers like Rooney and David Villa) which keep low but really travel. The neutered floaters of last season could sometimes make shooting from outside the box feel



like those dreams where you can only punch in slow motion - "I'm charging the bar but he just won't smack it" - but now there's a satisfying zing and, often enough, a goal to show for your efforts.

Crossing is better, too. Again, player choice is key (Walcott, as in real life, is all thrusting jets and haphazard delivery) but a simple dab of the lob pass button will curl one into the right area, and your men in the box are much more aggressive at attacking the ball than they have been in previous games. We've already scored several different types of header powered thunderbolts, glancing far-corner sneakers, tantalising nods back across the keeper - having struggled to score them with any regularity on FIFA 09. It's also easier to slide balls into the area along the deck, partly because the new dribbling and challenge systems mean when you beat a defender he's more likely to stay beaten, and partly because the passes are less likely to trickle into the hands of the keeper. Most importantly, attackers running into the box have better timing and positioning, presenting more options.

Split-screen Two ways to make a tricky free kick





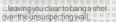


Set them to all dart away from



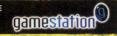








Bang – unless you've spooned the finish off the outside of your boot (or, you know, have just been tackled) you're in goal town.







The bottom line is that gameplay-wise it's another big step forward. Or rather, lots of sensible, finely tuned little steps that combine to make a single giant one. But there's more going on here than just gameplay advances. One of the big triumphs of next-gen FIFA has been the introduction of Be A Pro, the series' new take on the traditional sports game career mode in which you control a single, developing player. Now EA has come up with a way to expand that core idea and spread it to all areas of the game, with what they're calling Virtual Pro (yeah - it's a catchy marketing gimmick, but it turns out they're fine when the game kicks arse).

Be a contender

Virtual Pro takes the core of Be A Pro – the creation of a custom character that you'll grow and improve – and lets you play with him in every mode in the game. It's simple, but genius. So you can still go into Be A Pro mode and concentrate solely on your man (over four seasons, just like last year). Or you can play a one-off exhibition match with a friend using the team you've placed him into and develop him that way. Or you can make a league or cup, or even play an entire career in Manager mode, with your

■ Shooting's super contextual, so striking the ball when your forward is at a bad angle often means side-netting.



■ Keepers creep out for one-on-ones, so the constant temptation is to try a chip. They're hard.

Virtual Pro placed into the team of your choice, and play with and develop him as well as playing all the other bits of the game you wanted to anyway.

It's genius. It means there's always more than one thing going on – the game/cup/ season at hand, and advancing the talents of your Pro. Taking a cue from the ace Ultimate Team DLC (continued in FIFA 10, but again as

premium content), the accomplishments that track your Pro's progress (broken down into areas like striking, dribbling and defending) are represented in

PlayStation

a Panini-like sticker book. There are pages for each area and picture squares get filled in when an accomplishment is

achieved (scoring a chipped penalty, say, or banging in five



Not jumping for the ball, Dimi? Would never have had you pegged as a massive slacker, mate.

goals in a playing career). It runs a thread of XP-hunting through the entire game, and ties all FIFA's sometimes disparate modes together.

And there's loads more. Far too much to fit in here, like the brilliantly expanded arena with training matches and a custom free kick builder. Other bits we'll only be able to test properly when the game is released, like the updated live season in which you can replay your team's weekly fixtures and compare your results to the real thing, and the expanded online Clubs mode with

regional leagues and individual stat-tracking. In short, this not only plays the best on-the-pitch football of any FIFA title, but it has an incredibly smart and compelling way of tying it all together too. Brilliant, again. **Nathan Ditum**

PlayStation。Official Magazine UK

reviewPS3 Colin McRae Dirt 2



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Filthy perfection

Colin McRae Dirt 2

Like the man himself, it's legendary



he first trailer was the giveaway – rock music, tattoos, alcohol, a greasy breakfast, a grubby cabin, and an even grubbier Vikki Blows in her pants. Remember when SSX went all "Whoooooah!" with the release of SSX On Tour? Dirt 2 is SSX On Wheels – all about hanging out with your cool rally-driving buddies in a grotty trailer while on a mammoth global tour of the world's most extreme racing spots.

Every inch of every loading screen drips with visual effects and menus are ditched in favour of a virtual trailer park (because lists and icons just aren't cool enough). Pass the finish line and the action freezes SSX-style while the music fires up, sweeping you back to your world map with results overlaid in blocky upper case neon. Nobody could ever suggest Dirt 2 is effortlessly stylish, but it stays on the right side of vulgar and expands last year's gorgeous flowing menus into a totally fluid and engaging front-end. It's full of beautiful touches (back in your trailer park that same victory tune is now pumping out over the PA system) which complement the hyper-reality of the over-lit, over-glossy race circuits in a way

that only Criterion usually seems to manage to get right.

Dusty win

If only Dirt 2 were terrible you could take that manufactured style and shove it down the game's throat. But when you're hurtling around dusty tracks at 100mph on the very precipice of control, Dirt 2 feels satisfying – the kind of satisfaction honed by years of careful practice. That new signature look is a purposely sloppy John Hancock scrawled beneath what's currently the best on-track action on the PS3. Yeah, it's that good.

So good that you'll catch yourself doing things you haven't done in years – shifting your weight in your seat as you slide



reviewPS3

Colin McRae Dirt 2



into a turn and tipping your head as you steer away from an oncoming obstacle. It's immersion through brute force of feedback, and it's a degree of feedback no other racer on PS3 - not Burnout, not Gran Turismo, not Motorstorm - can match. Dirt 2 isn't a simulation, it's an unending highlight reel - a little prettier, faster, and always crazier than the real thing. The traditional point-to-point hill climbs and descents from past McRae games return, and are bundled with circuit races and eliminator events in buggies, rally cars, and Humvees. Tracks are cut through Sega Rally ravines, Californian arenas, and even the shell of Battersea Power Station.

Whatever the race, the AI cars drive like they mean it. Barrelling towards Battersea dock side-by-side with another heavyweight racer, each of you trying to nudge the other into a sudden and agonising stone/metal fusion, Dirt 2 is at its very best. Every event on every track makes you feel like you've really earned your victories. Squeaking across the line in first with your door hanging open and your bumper raggedly scraping along the floor, it's hard not to. You've maybe been here before – it's Grid on grit.

International Grid

Well, sort of. Like Batman and Superman, Dirt 2 and Race Driver Grid are different beasts that nevertheless



▲ The HUD is kept minimal – so all the focus is placed on the fast, beautiful driving.

belong to the same universe. The handling here is a little looser and the tracks rougher, but they're different sides of the same coin and feel similar on-track and off-, with Dirt 2 lifting every clever idea it can from Grid's big bag of tricks.

Most conspicuously, Dirt 2 lifts Grid's Flashbacks – a handful of rewinds and retries that can be used to erase any mid-race catastrophe and reset the



■ From Battersea to California, locations have been painstakingly researched and look amazing.

"Dirt 2 is an unending highlight reel – prettier, faster, and always crazier than the real thing."

action to the point when you were last feeling comfy on all four wheels. It was the best of Grid's innovations and it works even better on Dirt's wide-open tracks, where a single misplaced rock can rip the chassis off your vehicle.

As with Grid, there's always a stack of events to enter and always something to match what you most like to race. And like Grid it calls you by name, and it's as hardcore as you want it to be. Turn up the difficulty and you're given fewer Flashbacks and the Al becomes even more aggressive, but to compensate the XP rewards skyrocket and you find yourself swimming in dollar. As your XP rises, new stages open up across the globe, with the game's three X-Games championships acting as your major career landmarks (Dirt 2 being so out there that the World Rally Championship just isn't extreme enough).

But where Grid brought your speedy parade to a halt with its tedious Japanese drift racing events, Dirt 2 sticks to what it does best – rocketing along at eyestretching speeds in events that are about going as fast as you can. It's at its

most fiddly in the Gate Crasher rallies, where smashing on-track barriers adds seconds to the ever-depleting time limit. These are all about driving straight and true, and while they might teach you a thing or two about how to control a car like a pro, they come up short on the sheer bloody fun of throwing rally cars into tight corners and bouncing off opponents like metalheads in a moshpit.



Angle Auto-obsessive
"Only a 9? Really? This should be a
least. The original Dirt was a maste
and the seguel has taken all the bes

least. The original Dirt was a masterpiece, and the sequel has taken all the best bits and mashed them together to make something even better. Everything from the cars to the new menus feels intuitive. The soundtrack is brilliant, the driving is incredibly natural, and when you're racing you feel genuinely tense. Plus, I love it when they say my name."

Best for...Rough dirty racing a



Colin McRae Dirt 2/Kickings



☑ Winning unlocks items to go on your dashboard – a likeable bit of personalisation.



PlayStation

Fortunately, Dirt 2 batters Grid for options: if a staggered point-topoint rally in Croatia isn't to your liking, then you can hammer around Battersea in a colossal truck; while if you're not keen on hitting Tokyo's tarmac, you can throw up the dust in the deserts of California. There's even a Free Race option where you can set up any event with any rules you please and you'll earn XP as if your homemade campaign were part of the real career. Risk balances perfectly with reward, and there are rewards for everything - from tangible things like liveries, cars and dangly crap to hang from your mirror, to spectacular scenes when you push just a little too hard and your vehicle rolls and flips as though it's been blasted from a cannon.

Just champ

The difference in the end is that where Grid was iPod slick, Dirt 2 is filthy in every possible way, and complements rather than replaces

Codies' track racer. And the British developer is getting increasingly better at this racing business – however picky you try to be, there's little left to improve about Dirt 2. Saveable replays and photographs wouldn't hurt. Custom liveries would be nice. But it's surely all cosmetic from here on out. No racer handles better and few can match Codies for track design. This is very impressive stuff.

What of Colin himself? Well, there are occasional tips of the hat to the ex-rally champ (including an eye-welling moment when you're handed a car he once drove), but Dirt 2 is more about championing new drivers than mourning the great name behind the game. That said, it's a fitting tribute to the big man – not just because it's loud and

ugly and all the other things that he would have

> loved, but because it's absolutely spectacular: the real tribute is in this game's extraordinary quality.

Michael Gapper



Straight to bargain bin

With Nathan Ditum



If you're splashing out 40 notes on a game about tiny plastic men, the least you want is for it to be more fun than playing with the toys themselves. On this and just about every other count, **GI Joe: The Rise Of Cobra** fails. It's a

third-person shooter that requires no aiming of any kind, you simply nudge between targets like you're selecting victims from a menu, which is a bit like having a football game with no ball, or sex without a lady or an ending. It's the sort of mindless nonsense EA used to pour out a few years back, at the height of its Evil Empire days, and in that respect it's like a blast from the past. Take that, Activision! You're not the only one who can steal our hopes and wring the dreams from sleeping children.

Can you imagine being part of the development team on **Watchmen: The End Is Nigh Part II**? "Well, lads, the reaction to Part I wasn't what we were hoping for, but let's give it the old college try for Part II, eh? See if we can't pull it



out of the ba-""Boss? Come look at this, it's Batman: Arkham Asylum." "Oh, chew a c**k. Half day today, boys." It's not just the arrival of Gotham's favourite nutter that makes this torrid cash-in look bad – Part I was a disaster anyway – but it does render it beyond pointless. The fighting is like a design-your-own-game school project that uses Arkham Asylum as a template ("That's good children – oh, Johnny, again? Where are your spare trousers?") and compared to Batman's swishing cowl of justice, Nite Owl's cape physics are a 2/10.



TV Show King is what you'd get if you threw every TV quiz show you can think of against a wall, put the remains in a shiny bin and populated it with balloon-faced Xbox 360 avatars. So it's a lot like Buzz!,

except nowhere near as good. Like Buzz!, questions are multiple choice, with answers selected using the face buttons – only here, everyone can see the option you've gone for. Which would be brilliant, except you can't change your mind once you've decided, so there's no tricking idiots into choosing the wrong answer before switching at the last second, getting a few more points for being first. A giant Wheel Of Fortune gamble divides rounds and, since it has the potential to heap cash on your character or rob all their winnings, can also render them totally pointless. The whole thing feels cheap like cardboard painted silver. Toss.

Abomination of the month



If licensed games based on huge blockbusters like Shrek and Transformers

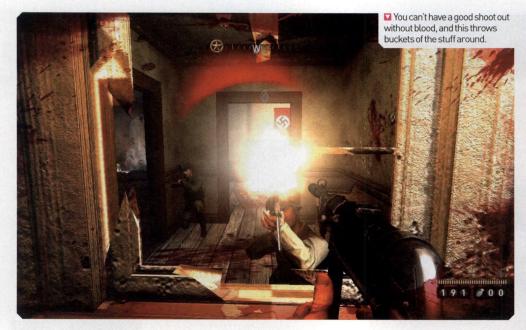
are routinely less fun than picking a fork out of your neck, then what hope for a game based on a tacky kiddie animation you've never heard of? None whatsoever, it turns out. **Donkey Xote** – from a quirky take on the tale of Don Quixote – is a proper mess from start to miserable finish. The collision detection is so hamfisted that the stupid main donkey character has trouble *falling into holes* placed in the game as hazards. I played for 20 minutes until I ran into a room with no visible exit containing two indestructible enemies, at which point my PSP mercifully ran out of juice. A shambles.

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reviewPS3

Wolfenstein





△ Nazi sorcerers can throw fireballs, control monsters and conjure shields to protect soldiers.





Occult classic

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Wolfenstein

The original Nazi zombies bite freedom's face again



he shooting's just right, that's the main thing. There's plenty to criticise in Wolfenstein's supernatural Nazi shooter – simple AI, unimaginative enemies and old fashioned gameplay mechanics – but, overall, the needle stays firmly in the fun chunk of the dial because this is a game that rewards you every time you pull the trigger.

Mainly with blood. Basic enemies burst real easy. Arms come off, heads explode to leave bodies stumbling forward uncertainly, and legs get blown away so soldiers brilliantly hop for a bit before dying (I've tried shooting the other leg – it doesn't work). Neck shots are the winner, with soldiers clasping their throats, spraying gore like a sprinkler and making horrible, final wet gurgles. There's also exaggerated physics to the animation; hit a runner and they'll crash to the floor in a tangle of flailing limbs.

These over-the-top deaths sum up Wolfenstein: big, stupid and all the better for it. Chuck a grenade in a room and when the smoke clears there'll be



Killzone 2 Mutant fascists in space. Great guns, killer action and the best looking game in existence.

VERDICT S



Call Of Duty: World At War Normal, un-spooky Nazis but still a strong shooter with a brilliant online mode. VERDICT 8

nothing left but bits. Later, as you unlock magic guns built from occult technology, it gets better. Mainly thanks to the Tesla Gun, which unleashes indiscriminate electric death on anything in front of you, and the Plasma Cannon, which vaporises people with a jarring electronic howl.

What works in its favour overall is that the difficulty is perfectly pitched at an enjoyable level. It's not that taxing, so you can enjoy shooting and maiming anything in your sights. But there's just enough of a challenge to provide a little resistance and stop you wading through unchecked.

Deutschland invader

The story follows series hero BJ
Blaskowicz. After recovering an amulet
with strange powers from the Third
Reich, he's sent behind enemy lines to
find out more. In practice, that means
roaming around a small German town
that acts as a hub, picking up objectives
and battling mounting Nazi forces. It's not
quite an open world but there are
enough nooks to explore and
multiple routes to keep

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PlayStation

multiple routes to keep things interesting. Once on a mission things play out much more like a traditional FPS: keep moving, keep shooting, repeat. Good times. As you explore you collect gold, intel and spooky old tomes which can be used to upgrade your gear. It's basic stuff – silencers, extended magazines, more damage and so on – but a fully pimped MP40 is a thing of pleasure. You also have Veil powers, supernatural abilities that come from the ancient amulet. These are: Sight, an enhanced vision mode that highlights hidden objects and enemies' weak spots; the time-slowing Mire; Shield; and Empower, which lets you shoot through other people's shields.

None of these abilities are outstanding innovations, but they offer up a few tactical options against the SS sorcerers, screaming zombie soldiers and armoured troopers that try to spoil your day. My best moment was using Mire to freeze a room full of Nazis, grab an axe and behead them one by one, then restart time to watch everyone gush blood and collapse in unison.

Make no mistake, this is far from the next Killzone 2 or COD4. What it

is, however, is constantly entertaining. Some of the boss fights are a bit rank and it's not overly pretty, but it's always a blast. A big, dumb, action movie blast. And that's fine by us.

Leon Hurley

reviewPSP

Soulcalibur: Broken Destiny



Soulcalibur Broken Destiny

Kratos vs pretty ladies. Do we really have to choose?

orchwood, Baywatch Hawaii, Saved By The Bell: The College Years... Spin-offs are tricky business, and this PSP incarnation of the swords and spirits fighting classic is no different. In case you were in any doubt, the game gives you a warning that any story within it "does not accurately represent Soulcalibur history". Despite that, the essence of 'Calibur has survived the transition almost entirely unscathed, serving up swift, brutal swordplay with a side of girls in maid outfits.

Because that's what Soulcalibur is all about: smashing up your enemy with increasingly ridiculous combos and outfits. Kratos, who makes a cameo, grows wings for one special move. Wings! There are 30 different characters



including Ivy, rhino-headed Rock and new character Dampierre, who works the gay ringmaster look but conceals deadly hidden blades, and a load of modes depending on your fighting style.

School of block

The Gauntlet pretends to be a story mode, but is essentially a tutorial. The sort that holds your hand and wipes the blood off your face with a spit-covered tissue. It teaches you to break blocks, avoid throws and gain the advantage with careful guarding, but the challenges last seconds. One move and you're done. It's worth it if your sword skills are rusty, or if you like side stories involving a werewolf, a maid called Pamela and a man in a purple thong. One mission is called Yoghurt Wars' for no apparent reason.

The meat of the game lies in the trials, which come in three flavours: Attack, Defence and Endless. The difficulty level is punishing from the first stage, where you can just about survive with some manic button mashing, **PlayStation** but any further than that and you need to be waiting for your enemies to make a mistake. It makes for a tactical and satisfying game, but will exclude

those who don't want to



It's not what we'd choose to wear into battle, but you just can't argue with fashion.



Like a high priced sex doll, everything about the game looks great, but it just doesn't feel right.



spend hours mastering Kilik's throw move, and just want to cut some people with swords. As a self-confessed button masher it took serious time for me to last more than a few matches in the Attack mode. Luckily, Quick Match is there for a fast hit of violence. It takes you into a faux battle lobby where you can choose an Al opponent by looking at their losses.

It looks great, from the characters to the movement. Armour shatters, breasts jiggle, and hair bounces like some sort of ancient L'Oréal ad. Frustrated stylists can have fun with the character creation system, letting their inner Gok Wan loose on the fighters, and tweaking everything from accessories to fighting style.

The problem here isn't the looks or the amount of stuff there is to do, it's the controls. The layout of PSP means that the control system loses its smooth feel in the transition to the nub - the struggle to adapt means that hardened 'Calibur players could feel at a disadvantage

against complete novices. If you're used to mapping your moves to the shoulder buttons, PSP's two bumpers just don't cut it. At least that'll be your excuse when your sister trashes you in versus mode. Rachel Penny







Mini Ninjas







■ Battling the owl boss is all about creeping behind him.

Futo is from the 'large and in charge' school of fighting.

Like ants, the evil samurai aren't hard to kill. But SWEET JEEBUS there are a lot of them.

poking them with a sharp sword) and rescuing your friends. Oh, and doing a spot of fishing.

A Hiro comes along

Hiro is a multi-tasker. He can fight with his sword, use power attacks to take out a whole load of enemies at once, conjure

spells that do everything from raining down freezing snow to possessing wildlife, and use his hat as a shield, a boat, and a sledge. (One brilliant scene sees you sliding down a mountain in your hat, using Sixaxis to steer.) As you rescue your ninja friends you're able to swap to them, but Hiro's the one you have to use for boss fights, the only one who can fish, and, most importantly, the only one who can use magic. Spells range from sunshine blasts to lightning storms and, best of all, an animal possession spell. You can take control of any sort of creature you see on the map (even evil samurai later in the game) and utilise

their skills to your advantage. Boars and bears can be used to attack enemy troops, and anything else, from a chicken to a frog, can help to spot useful potion ingredients around the game world.

Not that your ninja friends don't also come in handy. Alright, so I managed to play through almost the entire thing with Hiro, and maybe 10 minutes of Futo (the big guy with the hammer, essential for taking down the giant samurai) but it's good to know the choice is there. One, Taro, thinks he's a tiger and runs on all fours, which is pretty damn adorable. With so many ninjas on offer (six in total), it seems a shame that the developer

Five must-try ninja hobbies



Herb gathering

Whittingstall of ninjas and pick the selection of herbs, flowers and mushrooms that are scattered around the levels.



Potion class

you, some make you burp, and some turn you into a fish.



Fishing

Give a man a fish and he can feed himself for a day, give a ninja a own sushi for a quick health pick-me-up on the go.



Statues

too busy to appreciate home furnishings. These collectibles



caged beasties. Free them all to get that warm fuzzy feeling inside







It's hard to hate the samurai when they're so adorable. Look at his funny little hat!



■ Welcome to evil boss airlines.



■ The blizzard spell freezes enemies.

skipped offline co-op, but the ending leaves space for a sequel, so maybe it's saving it. Still, the choice of skills means the minute it all starts to feel a bit samey you can swap, and voila! A whole new load of powers to play with.

Foul winds

It's worth

△ Hiro is the, erm, hero, of

the whole adventure.

The enemies don't vary too much, but the ways you can dispatch them do. You can stun them with throwing stars, use a burping potion to poison them with clouds of green gas, or zap them with lightning. And that's before you even count the different ninjas' special skills, like Suzume's magic flute, which sends all the tiny evil samurai into a dancing frenzy.

bosses - elemental spirits sent by the warlord - are

Videogame Frankenstein Mini Ninjas is cute and cuddly, but lacks a little bite... Hitman's

mentioning that you can avoid a lot of battles by creeping stealthily through the undergrowth (there's even a spell to turn Hiro into a bush for a short time) but let's face it, that's no fun is it? The battles are never tough enough to make sneaking around a matter of life or death, so why not just go in, burps blazing, and get a bit messy?

> Where the whole package is let down slightly is its boss battles. I've got no problem with buttonmatching events, but for each boss you need to do the same sequence three times, with exactly the same results. It's a shame, because the designs of all Ninjas'



☑ Sure, that evil dude might look big, but a few well-timed smacks to the head and he's out.



The legendary farting boss. He puts that fan, and last night's lager, to deadly use.

PlayStation.

pretty cool. There's the farting boss, who fans his bottom burps towards you, a giant owl creature that flaps about while mumbling to itself on top of a snowy building, and one that wobbles while you hack at its stilts to make it shorter. All inventive characters, but all with super boring ways of dispatching them.

Unhappy ending

The final level suffers from a similar problem. The premise is amazing: scampering through a burning, collapsing living castle. But the reality is a psychotic camera and having to sit in the garden for a bit to calm down. Your view is almost always obscured, and with the cartoon puffs of smoke and flames, often you're jumping blind. It's one of the few places check

points are in short supply too. It's the hardest part of the game, but not because the enemies are cleverer, or the acrobatics more precise, just because you can't see a bloody thing. Battle through it though, because the final fight against the evil warlord lets you put all your talents to good use, from your spells to that pepper bomb that makes the enemy samurai sneeze themselves to death.

It's all over pretty quickly. The low level of difficulty means you can breeze through it in an afternoon, but the important thing is you'll enjoy it. There are distractions if you want to extend your stay, like collecting herbs and mushrooms (see 'Five things to do'), all giving perfectionists a reason to keep exploring. And whatever you're doing, it's all eye candy. One scene, where you're creeping across rooftops and strings of red lanterns,

is so pretty that it wouldn't look out of place in a

Pixar film. So, if you've got kids, buy it for them. And if you haven't, then adopt a few and buy it anyway.

Rachel Penny



reviewPS3 IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey



Glorious war

IL-2 Sturmovik Birds Of Prev

"...you're flying without wiiiings." Wait, what?



s a lad, I remember getting very excited about the idea of Airfix Kits. I had a dream of having a bedroom covered with WW2 fighters, frozen in the throws of an epic dogfight in the skies above the Dover cliffs. And it stayed just that – a dream, because my patience as a child was slightly shorter than the life expectancy of a blind Luftwaffe bomber, and the only time I tried actually making the things I glued a finger into my ear.

The big hook of Sturmovik is that it allows big kids like me to play out their Biggles fantasies without the need to read assembly instructions or

understand solvents. Start up the game and you immediately find yourself in the cockpit of a Spitfire MkII, blasting rounds of white-hot metal at the Reich's finest.

Rookie rolling

The flight mechanics are easy to grasp, but accurate enough to give you a sense of the aerodynamic limitations of both fighters and bombers. The left stick is your main flight control, altering pitch and roll (moving the plane up and down, and spinning it left and right on its axis), while the right stick is in charge of the rudder and throttle, steering right and left and altering your speed. Nothing out of the ordinary so far. But it's the subtlety and responsiveness of Sturmovik that sets it apart - using tiny adjustments of the rudder to line up an enemy in your sights, or easing off the sensitive throttle (which is where the stick controls beats a standard button setup hands down) to match speed with your target as you pull out of a banking turn.

In the default arcade mode the handling is smooth and the physics mercifully forgiving, making the game accessible despite the underlying authenticity. It's fun, basically, in a way Airfix Kits really aren't. And it builds on the excellent basics of its controls. The loosely tied-together campaign is like an aerial Call Of Duty, giving you different pilots to play with in theatres of war like Sicily, Stalingrad, and – best of the bunch - the Battle Of Britain, which feels so real it had me semi-deliriously humming Jerusalem throughout. As you progress you unlock a handbook of more advanced manoeuvres, a bit like a fighting game move list. These set out fancier moves in blueprint tutorials, some of which you'll know (the barrel roll) and some you won't (the Immelmann turn). With the emphasis on strategy, the game also teaches you when to use them - for instance, entering a barrel roll to cut air speed while maintaining direction and throttle, enabling you to switch positions

What you do in... IL-2 Sturmovik



IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey/Movies





PlayStation.



■ The cockpit view is only for maniacs.

with a pursuing attacker during dogfights as they stream past you.

Once you've nailed the basics, you unlock realistic (hard) and simulator (bloody hard) modes. The former takes away the subtle weapon and air speed correction systems, and turns on more realistic world physics, so you spend your first ten minutes stalling, going into flat spins, and burning to death in screaming agony. Simulator mode is even more hardcore, with no external view option (turns out flying from inside the cockpit is really hard) and no icons denoting friend from foe.

The missions themselves take a back seat to the fun of flying – it's a fairly standard collection of dogfights, bombing runs and escort objectives. But visually, developer Gaijin Entertainment



■ Just out of shot: Aled Jones on fire.

has created a real feast. The faithfully recreated planes look sexy, threatening and graceful like a fleet of ballet dancers packing assault rifles, and the cloud effects and weather systems are a triumph. No, really - there's a wonderfully eerie feeling to dogfighting almost blind inside a thunderstorm, only to climb 100 feet and find yourself bathed in sunshine as the battle rages below. Even the ground is detailed and historically accurate, having been recreated using archive photographs and maps, from Sussex to Stalingrad.

The result is a huge surprise – a nerdy, technically accurate flight sim that's also loads of fun to play. And best of all, it doesn't involve superglue at all.

David Boddington

BluMovies

HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



17 Again

Director Burr Steers **Starring** Zac Efron, Matthew Perry **ETA** Out now

Like Big, only with Zac Efron's tiny newt face instead of Tom Hanks'. Matthew Perry's sadsack dad wishes he was 17 again, and then is, leaving his younger self (Efron, to be fair, not being rubbish) to fix his marriage and broken parenting. Not awful, but weirdly heavy.





Terminator: Salvation

Director McG **Starring** Christian Bale, Sam Worthington **ETA** 23 November

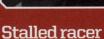
Us and giant CG recreations of Arnold Schwarzenegger are done professionally. Hard to see how it's possible to make Christian Bale, an army of robots and millions of dollars of explosions look boring, but somehow this does. Meh.



reviewPS3

Supercar Challenge





SupercarChallenge

Ferrari sequel adds cars, removes fun

here are actually two games on offer here. One is an assist-filled, noob-friendly racer that will keep novice gamers entertained with its shiny Ferraris and bumper car racing action while basically removing the chore task of actually driving the car. This bit works – it's a visual improvement over predecessor Ferrari Challenge, and also boasts a range of other manufacturers, although it's still very Ferrari-centric. The damage modelling is pretty lame, with only cosmetic scratches even after crunching head-on impacts, but on the whole it's playable and genuinely fun.

Then there's the real game. The one boastfully angling to be decreed the greatest racing simulation ever made. The one for the racing hardcore who use manual gears *for fun*. And that's the one that fails horrifically.

The biggest problem is the handling. I've been in a real Ferrari, and they just don't move like this. Supercar Challenge's vehicles have the inertia of a twin-seat stroller on an ice rink, and about as much speed. You'll need to double the braking distances you know from other games – including Ferrari Challenge – because these things just

Carslist The upstart



Ferrari California



Ferrari F50 G1

The daddy



McLaren F1

The rascal



Zonda F

don't stop, even with ABS turned on. Ludicrously, not even the AI can stay on the road, overshooting the first chicane at Monza every single time. Then again, the CPU drivers also like to ride directly onto the grass on opening straights, and some even manage to steer straight into the wall off the start line. This isn't fallible AI, it's broken.

The tracks on offer are a real mixed bag. Highlights like Infineon, Homestead Infield and Redwood Park all look great. Superb, even, especially when the game's rotating rainbow lens flare kicks in. (Don't laugh – I thought I'd seen every kind, so it was exciting.) But then you hit the fictional French Riviera and it looks muddy and lo-res like a PS2 game.

Saving graces

For all that, there are some nice touches. The sunlight glinting off perfectlymodelled bodywork is

impressive, and the new viewpoint that echoes Sega's Ferrari 355 Challenge is a cute nod to the series' spiritual predecessor. The right stick gearshift makes a welcome



▲ There's a livery edit option, but it's limited to 50 layers per side. No Mona Lisas here, then.



You don't so much drive around corners as crash through them in a series of straight lines.



▲ The pack merges into single file at the start of the race, letting you gain around ten places.

EUDECAR CHALLENGE O

Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub System 3 Dev Eutechnyx Players 1-16 Web supercarchallenge.com It's like A rubbish Ferrari Challenge

return (why isn't this in every racing game?) and the sensation of riding kerbs is really meaty – the opening turns of Paul Ricard feel close to perfect. It's just the other 90% of the game that's dull.

Perhaps most tellingly, a comparison with the older, rougher Ferrari Challenge leaves the new boy choking on exhaust fumes. Like an impressionist painter with a limited but vivid colour palette, the original's overall picture has greater impact than this washy watercolour. The car handling, sense of speed and, above all, the atmosphere of Ferrari Challenge is streets ahead of its sequel.

The bottom line: if you didn't like Ferrari
Challenge, then you'll hate this. And if you did like it... you'll probably still hate this. It's almost

Justin Towell





Delicious gluttony

Fat Princess

A beautiful marriage of cake and claret

sually a mixture of cake and blood means a health inspector needs to be called. And the wedding's probably over. Here, however, the oddball pairing come together to form a cheeky cartoon package of death matches and kidnapping, all in the name of online gaming. The end result is as brilliant as it is ludicrous.

Fat Princess is essentially a big old game of capture the flag, except in this case all the flags are chubby royalty. Your 16-man team has to rescue your princess from the enemy castle, while keeping theirs locked in your dungeon. The more cake you feed your prisoner, the bigger she gets, and the slower the enemy rescue party will travel on their escape. Sound genius? It is.

Job centre

To add a little depth to the bloodsplattered mayhem (there's blood... everywhere) there are five classes to play as: warrior, mage, worker, ranger and priest. Swapping between them is as easy as picking up a new hat, and each can be upgraded if the worker gathers enough resources. The real challenge is getting your team to work together towards a **PlayStation** common goal, and occasionally things can get a little frustrating - no

matter what orders you

bark into your headset your





■ Tactics are vital, but you'll have to get your teammates to listen to you first. (They won't.)

teammates will carry on with what they're doing regardless, and the uptake of headsets generally on PSN is still pretty low. Fall in with the right bunch, though, and the mix of frantic gameplay, cartoon gore and bizarre humour (the credits feature you as the grim reaper, wiping out men, women and giant chickens as Baby Got Back plays on in the background) is properly brilliant. Plus there are other modes, like a standard deathmatch (clearly made for sociopaths), and a football game that's essentially a massive brawl with two goals at either end (clearly made for fans of Arsenal and

Manchester United). At £11.99 this is an

expensive slice of PSN, but the end result is so tasty you won't regret it. **Rachel Penny**

JapanWatch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

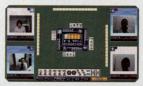
Janline R



In a move not unlike fitting a horse and cart with ceramic brakes, bucket seats and a spoiler.

Mahjong newcomer Janline R harnesses the might of 21st century technology online multiplayer, avatar customisation - to tart up an ancient game that would, arguably, benefit from being left well alone. See also pachinko, monopoly, chess, and chatting up women way out of your league.





428 Fuusa Sareta Shibuya de



We've featured visual novels before, but this is the first that's a) had its multi-layered, chronologically fractured narrative compared to the likes of Pulp Fiction and Magnolia, and b) received a perfect 40/40 in Famitsu Weekly. Not impressed? Well this is only the ninth occasion that it's awarded this score. Expect a hurried UK release

followed by a flood of four sales, soon.





Toro to Morimori

The consensus among the writer of this column is that spuriously themed collections of mini-

games are the playground of social gamers and ADD developers with tight deadlines and even tighter budgets. And not unlike an oil tanker powered by righteous truth, it's full steam ahead for this consensus in light of this uninspired outing for Sony Japan's mascot, the trapezoidally faced Toro the cat.

Exotic Boxart Of The Month



Professional Baseball Spirits 6

commentary on chronic overcrowding in urban Japan?

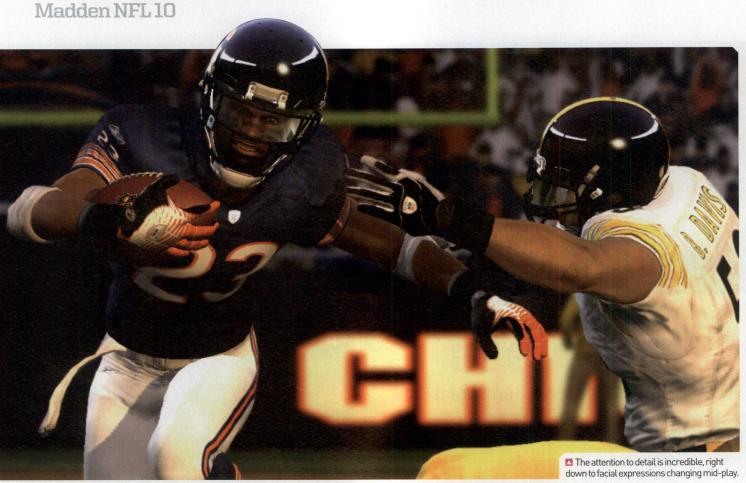


Kamen Rider: Climax Heroes



Memories Off 6: Next Relation

reviewPS3





Championship game

Madden NFL 10

American football's biggest name makes a triumphant comeback



A Tiburon holds the dubious honour of having made the worst sports game on PS3: the shoddily clobbered together mess that was Madden NFL 07. Three years on, with a completely new staff, the California based team has earned itself another accolade, one that they might actually want to coo over at the Christmas party: the biggest turnaround for a sports series this decade. Madden NFL 10 is remarkable. And unlike three years ago, we mean that for the right reasons.

For an annual update, the number of improvements over last year's game –

which, in fairness, was a step in the right direction - is astonishing. And we're not talking off-the-field gimmicks: these are tangible gameplay improvements. The biggest of all is that everything has been slowed down, enabling you to read the game better: spotting missed blocks by your offensive line, or open receivers, or lanes for your running back to slip through. It's a genius tweak, especially given the new, wider scale of player attributes. There's a huge difference in the feel of a big bruiser like Brandon Jacobs, and a speed demon like Ryan Grant, and an all-round destroyer like Adrian Peterson... all special running backs, but for very different reasons. With quarterback ratings also expanded to cover short, medium, and long throws, the generic feel of players that haunted previous years is gone. Try using a slow but accurate QB like Peyton Manning to run all over the shop and you'll be punished, which is how it should be.

As well as completely reworking the attributes system, the developer has retuned the AI so that every one of the 32 NFL teams emulates its real life counterpart. Previous games have had team-specific playbooks; this one does that, but also goes a step further, with correct use of tactics, subs, and so on thrown in too. Super Bowl finalists the Arizona Cardinals will throw, throw, and, when that fails, throw again; Pittsburgh Steelers play hard-hitting, smash mouth football on both sides of the ball; Miami's



With multiple camera angles, there's a real 'TV broadcast' feel to every single game you play.

What you do in... Madden 10

10% Nerdily loving the stat
updates that appear
after each play.
25% Blitzing, giving
up 20 yards, then
blitzing again.
15% Only playing as
teams that use the
Wildcat formation.





innovative Wildcat formation, where a running back lines up in the QB position, is regularly rolled out by the AI in an attempt to catch you off guard, just as the real-life Dolphins did to teams regularly last season. While Madden's later years on PS2 were fantastic, it never got the feel of each team's style of play being different quite right. New Madden does, and it's groundbreaking.

A big season

The place where all these realistic tweaks mesh together near-perfectly is in the game's flagship Franchise mode, which has been rebuilt this year from the ground up, and in style. Last year we specifically criticised it for being too vanilla... not this time. In addition to Madden playing realistically on the field, Al teams now draft and trade in human ways, so you'll no longer see the Pats select a QB in the first round despite having Tom Brady, or trade you their best linebacker for a fourth round draft pick. And free agents won't just join your side because you offer them the most money - while some want the big bucks, others want success, or to play for their hometown team - making it much tougher to just go out and build your dream team. The resulting depth approaches Football Manager on PC levels, which is almost unheard of for a console game.







Play these

All-Pro Football 2K8

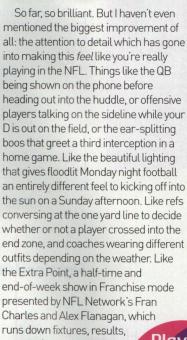
VERDICT 8

Football 10

VERDICT 7

Net-based teambuilder feature makes this a

Once superior rival has finally been left eating turf by new Madden.



stats and a wealth of other info from around the league. I used to make fanboyish lists of all the things that happened in real gridiron that Madden chose to ignore; now I can't



Defenders no longer have eyes in the backs of the heads, making big picks more satisfying.



Like in real life, pre-game coverage includes a comparison of the two starting quarterbacks.

believe quite how many tiny yet important details the development team has managed to cram in inside the space of 12 months. Quite simply, it's wonderful.

Post-game analysis

In Madden's PS2 days realism came secondary to just making a fun game, and for its time that worked brilliantly. But in the HD world of virtual sport, priorities are different: now we want realism as well as fun. Madden NFL 10 has both in droves. Immersive.

> addictive, and authentic, it's a sensational return to form for the series. And in a year of great sports games, it makes a strong case for being named the very best of the bunch. Ben Wilson



reviewPSN Wipeout HD Fury



It could be the new tracks, or we've just got worse, but the Al racers seem super aggressive.



Over ten years on, the Feisar ship is still the most stylish thing you can drive on PlayStation.

Speed burst

Wipeout HD Fury

The (really, really) fast and the furious

he original Wipeout HD is polished, clean and fast to the point that playing it makes you feel like an electron being blasted through the circuit boards of an iPod so sexy and advanced that Apple haven't invented it yet. It's brilliant, immersive and, when you submit to its relentless pounding rhythms and blinkless speeds, exhilarating to the point of exhaustion. Plus, at only £11.99, it's an absolute steal – just finishing the thing, let alone scoring gold in every event, took me way longer than the ten-hour average that most full-price games offer.

Big excitement, then, over this substantial expansion pack, which brings a redesigned front end (a dark and broody one) and more excitingly, 13 new ships, eight fresh tracks, an original campaign with 80 new events and, best of all, three new types of event to play.

The new tracks, admittedly, are only kind of new. One – Modesto Heights – is a



late arrival from Wipeout's PSP launch effort Pure, while three others – The Amphiseum, Talon's Junction, and Tech De Ra – are taken from Pure's sequel, Pulse. If they feel a little like second round picks, it's because that's exactly what they are – all fun to race with some nasty chicanes, but offering no standout section or feature (like the magnetic drop in Metropia, say, or that effing hairpin in Chenghou Project) that you learn to love or, in most cases, love to hate.

On top of this, there are four Zone tracks also taken from Pure (Pro Tozo, Mallavol, Coridon 12 and Syncopia), but I'm normally so busy closing my eyes and screaming desperate prayers during Zone mode that I barely have time to pay attention to the layout of what I'm repeatedly smashing into.

Fight and flight

The really exciting thing is the appearance of the new event types.

These are Eliminator, Detonator and Zone Battle. Eliminator is the most destructive and messy of the bunch. It's not really a race at all, more like a fight at high speeds – the objective is to reach a point target by inflicting damage upon and

ultimately destroying your opponents. As a result, it can feel slower than regular events, especially when you find yourself far adrift from the pack, but the major saving grace is the ability to turn your ship 180 degrees with 17, rounding on surprised enemies in a second and launching weapons right into their cockpit. Satisfying.

The other two are variations on Wipeout's trancey, Tron-like Zone mode. Zone Battle has a risk and reward setup - as you pass over speed pads you'll fill a gauge, which can either boost you nearer the target Zone level or replenish your ship's health. It's good, but not as good as the fantastic Detonator, which is like regular Zone except with guns, and has you tearing brakelessly around neon-flashing tracks shooting mines and bombs with a reloadable cannon. It's last-gasp stuff, and you'll have to time your reloads perfectly and use a speed pad-charged EMP to avoid being ruined in the first few laps. It feels like a

proper evolution of Wipeout's core amazingness (yes, that's a word) and, along with the multiple hours of gameplay in the new campaign, makes £7.99 a

Nathan Ditum

proper bargain.

What you do in... Wipeout HD

and not understanding why. Why?!

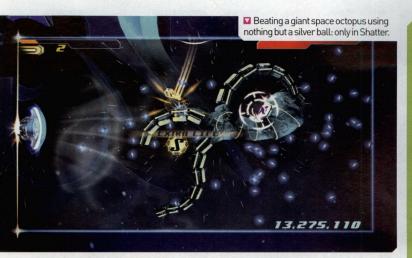
5% Using the EMP just before you're exploded. High-fiving yourself.

15% Hitting all the

5% Trying to stop your brain vibrating at the same BMP as the soundtrack.

→ **19%** Waiting around corners with loaded missiles in Eliminator.

→ 30% Forgetting to blink for ages and then needing a little break.



Space breaker

Shatter

This summer's best block buster

rkanoid was one of the great arcade games of the '80s – a top-down twitch-puzzler which saw you bouncing balls at a coloured wall using a 'spaceship' that was really just a giant silver bat. It's been copied to the point of the concept becoming cliché, yet never bettered... until now. Shatter is Arkanoid for the noughties, sprinkled with a little Super Stardust. And man oh man, it works.

Suck vs blow

Despite the above similarities, this is more than a lazy tarting up of an aging beauty. It's noticeably faster than any previous block-breaking game, and levels play horizontally, vertically, or even in the round. As you shatter blocks, little S-shaped fragments fall towards your ship which you collect to activate a Shard Storm - a slo-mo shower of gunfire which decimates any blocks in its way and looks new Doctor Who assistant pretty. Plus you can suck objects like the ball (good), fragments (very good) or loose blocks (very, very bad) towards you by holding 12, or blow them away with @2.

This is especially handy for as quice manipulating the ball's path during the boss battles that provide the climax to each of the game's ten worlds. They're the best bits of Shatter and range from a giant snake made of purple segments to a mechanical clock that





■ Tap ⊗ to bring an extra ball into play – then swear when it all gets too fast to keep up with.



■ It takes time to adjust to the in-the-round levels, but the effort is absolutely worth it.

regenerates protective blocks as its hands tick round. Complete the game once and you unlock Boss Rush, a bespoke mode in which you try to defeat all ten bosses in a row as quickly as possible. It's exhilarating stuff, and cements

Shatter's status as a true PSN treat. This is right up there alongside Trash Panic as the best the Store currently has to offer in the sub five quid range.

Ben Wilson



Essential tunes to download this month

Arctic MonkeysCrying Lightning

ormat Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

More sharp-tongued indie, this time with a psychedelic edge (for which you can thank the knob-twiddling skills of co-producer Josh 'Queens Of The Stone Age' Homme). A taster of their new album Humbug, also out August.

myspace.com/arcticmonkeys





Municipal Waste Massive Aggression

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Enjoyably stoopid air guitar fare from Richmond, Virginia's contribution to the current thrash revival. Chaotic, hard-riffing metal with rebel attitude and song titles like Horny For Blood and Wrath Of The Severed Head, it's music to rip the sleeves off your T-shirt and worship Satan to. Responsibly, of course.

myspace.com/municipalwaste





Fink over thudding drums and tangles of acoustic guitar, and a thousand independent film directors reach for their battered Super-8. It's quiversome, emotive indie-folk with an ear for a tune and an eye for a pretty mental picture. myspace.com/noahandthewhale

reviewPSP

Dissidia: Final Fantasy



HP sauce

Dissidia Final Fantasy

Handheld Squeenix spinoff knocks us out

his should be rubbish. A fighting game based on Final Fantasy, the RPG series renowned for its tortuous turn-based scrapping. But instead of stop-start dreariness, the order of the day is sensation. Dissidia understands that spectacle is what distinguishes a proper ruckus from ye olde epic battle: these fighters fly like angels, home in like missiles, and clash like triumphant fireworks. It's a superpretty take on fighting.

Complex tactics

As well as belting the hell out of your opponent, Dissidia is also about balancing two related, chargeable meters: one for bravery points (BP), and one for hit points (HP). Each fighter has HP and BP attacks – the BP attack steals your opponent's BP, and the power of your HP attack depends on how much BP you have. When you whack someone with an HP attack, it takes away their health but resets your BP meter. Got that? It's complicated, but sets up some



Cloud

Flouncy fop



Firing



Sephiroth

seesawing strategy – will you whittle away your opponent's health with dinky strikes, or build up your BP reserves to take them out in one go? With players tagging each other for BP to weaken their enemy's attacks and strengthen their own, fights are about timing and controlling space – more of a boxing match than a brawl then, but with room for haymakers if you can get a 20,000 BP insta-knockout combination. It's brilliant.

So Dissidia's gorgeous, great fun, and wraps this up with excellent production values that add real depth. There's a full story mode for each of the 11 hero characters, an arcade mode, online multiplayer, bags of unlockable extras, and perhaps the most comprehensive accessories and equipment system in any beat-em-up ever, with thousands of stats-boosting weapons and armour combinations

for you to toy around with.
Faults? There are a couple.



Sometimes the camera struggles to keep up as fights jolt from side to side, resulting in the occasional obstruction on some stages (Ultimecia's Castle and its long winding staircase being the prime example). Plus the plot's the usual fighting game hokum ('Destiny's burden weighs heavily on Cloud's giant sword') – but hey, this is a Final Fantasy game.

The bottom line is that you don't have to be a Final Fantasy nut, or even a fighting game aficionado, to enjoy

Dissidia. It's a bright, distinctive and hugely playable game, and is a massive slap in the face for other PSP fighters.

Rich Stanton



Tower protector

Crystal Defenders

Vanilla flavoured old skool strategy

his is tower defence with a distinct Final Fantasy flavour. Like some sort of omniscient, battle-hungry god, you drop different classes of fighter (mages, berserkers, thieves) onto a map, then wait for wave after wave of enemies to march past on their way to a designated exit. Easy peasy, right? Not when a crowd of firebombs are racing across the screen at panicinducing speed, and you've spent all your coins on an army of beserkers who are stuck on the wrong side of the map.

That's the thing – as is the case in all tower defence games, once your men are placed they can't move, so you have to plan ahead carefully. You can buy new fighters and upgrade your current ones with cash earned through kills, but a smart strategy is needed from the off. If the enemy breach your ranks and reach the end zone then they'll steal your precious crystals. Lose the lot and it's game over for you.

All fall down

Which might not be a bad thing.

While Crystal Defenders may seem a ll the a retro treat for anyone who stays in on a Friday to polish their limited edition

Moogle figurines, it should be little more than a curiosity for anyone else. Yes, the £7.99





Fail to plan ahead and you could be saying hello to Mr Fire and his good friend Lord Pain.

download includes three different versions of the game (W1, W2 – which introduces power crystals that can be placed onto the map to give stat boosts – and W3, which boasts trickier maps and new classes). But it still only adds up to 12 different maps, and for all its old skool charm, a little polish with the magic 720p cloth wouldn't have done it any harm.

Its biggest problem, though, is the competition that's already available on the store. Pixeljunk Monsters has all the tower defence satisfaction and

coin collecting shenanigans, with the added sweetener

with the added sweetener of offline co-op. And not even an army of level 8 black mages can change that.

Rachel Penny



Coming soon to a		,	,
PlayStation near you	The state of the s	/	10
iay ocacioninoar y oa	A STATE OF THE STA	/AT	Lourist.
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	Square Enix	4Sep	PSP
GI Joe: The Rise Of Cobra	EA	4Sep	PS3
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds Of Prey	505 Games	4Sep	PS3
The Beatles: Rock Band	EA	9 Sep	PS3
Colin McRae Dirt 2	Codemasters	11Sep	PS3
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	11 Sep	PS3
NHL 2K10	Take Two	11Sep	PS3
Need For Speed Shift	EA	18 Sep	PS3 •
The Clone Wars: Republic Heroes	LucasArts	18 Sep	Multi
Katamari Forever	Namco Bandai	18 Sep	PS3
Ninja Gaiden Sigma II	Tecmo Koei	25 Sep	PS3
Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2	Activision	25 Sep	PS3
Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatballs	Ubisoft	Sep	PS3/PSP
Wet	Activision	Sep	PS3
FIFA10	EA	20ct	Multi
Gran Turismo	Sony	20ct	PSP
Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising	Codemasters	90ct	PS3
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Sony	13 Oct	PS3
Brutal Legend	EA	16 Oct	PS3
WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2010	THQ	23 Oct	PS3
Borderlands	Take Two	Oct	PS3
Dark Void	Capcom	Oct	PS3
F12009 •	Codemasters	Oct	PSP
Jak And Daxter: The Lost Frontier	Sony	Oct	PS2/PSF
PES 2010	Konami	Oct	PS3
SingStar Take That	Sony	Oct	PS3
Tekken 6	Namco Bandai	Oct	PS3
Modern Warfare 2	Activision	10 Nov	PS3
Assassin's Creed II	Ubisoft	20 Nov	PS3
Assassin's Creed: Bloodlines	Ubisoft	Nov	PSP
Bioshock 2	Take Two	Nov	PS3
Ratchet And Clank: A Crack In Time	Sony	Nov	PS3
Red Dead Redemption Assassin	Rockstar	Nov	PS3
Tony Hawk: Ride	Activision	Nov	PS3
Avatar	Ubisoft	Dec	PS3
Battlefield Bad Company 2	EA	Dec	PS3
Dead To Rights: Retribution	Namco Bandai	Dec	PS3
Gran Turismo 5	Sony	Dec	PS3
White Knight Chronicles	Sony	Dec	PS3
Brink	Bethesda	Mar10	PS3

123



Square Enix

Sony

Sony

Mar 10

Mar10

2010

PS3

PS3

Final Fantasy XIII

God Of War III

Heavy Rain

online PS3 **Buzz! Brain Of The UK**





Quiz master

Buzz! Brain Of The UK

If shooting the kids is hard, why not out-think them?



he appeal of Buzz! online is simple: you can dress up like an Elvis impersonator and humiliate total strangers with your encyclopaedic knowledge of Bugs Bunny cartoons, all from the comfort of your own sofa. And if simply winning isn't enough, you can make your own quiz about the carrotchomping cross-dresser and share it with the world.

modes: Sofa vs Sofa, which is like the offline game only with net-based opponents, and MyBuzz!, where you create and play user-generated quizzes covering just about every subject imaginable.

Call my bluff

There are four round types in Sofa vs. Sofa. Stop The Clock and Fastest Finger are straightforward tests of knowledge and speed, with typically simple questions ("What cartoon character did Elmer Fudd hunt?") allowing the player with the nimblest reactions to nab the most points. Things get more tactical in High Stakes, where you wager your points according to how well you think you'll do in a particular subject. Get the question wrong and you lose the lot. Generally, my bets were very low on questions about Italian designer labels and very high on those about '80s synth music. I am not proud.

Finally there's All That Apply, in which you select multiple answers which relate to the current question. There's a brilliantly devious side to this round, as

your opponents can also see your selections. So you can make a show of pretending that Marshall Mathers' pseudonyms are Engelbert Humperdink and Vanilla Ice, watch your opponents copy you, and then change your answers at the last second. It's deliciously sneaky, and makes up for the loss of offline multiplayer rounds as well as reflexes.

But it's not all double-dealing and competition. In fact, one of the best things about playing Buzz! online is how relaxed it is (a massive surprise, considering the tantrums we've had over in-office games). Partly this is by design - the game keeps things even by allowing the losing player to choose the subject for the next round - but also because, with over 5,000 possible questions, there isn't the same sense that you have to plough hours into the game to get any joy out of playing it.

What you do in... Buzz!

32% Thinking up preposterous quiz subjects: insect collectors of 6% Checking the batteries in your buzzer because you're sureyou got that one the last century, anyone? 24% Screaming obscene chants having trashed people you don't know. 10% Learning more about Red Dwarf than you ever dreamed possible. 1.3% Instantly regretting the bet you laid in High Stakes having misread the quiz title. 15% Tricking follow-



△ Losers get to choose the subject for the next round so even if you suck you still have a chance.



△ A lot of the guestions are idiotically simple and test relfexes rather than knowledge.

PlayStation.

Practice won't make perfect, and the best training consists of watching telly and reading magazines rather than wearing down your thumbs practising Guile's Flash Explosion or perfecting your sniper aim.

The people versus

The really big draw of online Buzz!. though, is that it's open-ended. In the MyBuzz! guiz mode you can design your own questions online and play an endless number of user-created guizzes for free. Finding an obscure set of questions that pushes your trivia buzzer can be really satisfying (Characters Of The Wire and Kickboxing Films Of The Eighties drilled right into my specialist areas of knowledge), and it's not that hard to do, given the wealth of content on offer. As you'd guess, the custom quizzes are skewed towards geek-

friendly cult subjects. Spaced and Red Dwarf have countless endless quizzes dedicated to them, but Ross Kemp's army fantasy Ultimate

Force has just one. One too many, you could argue.

Designing your own quiz is limited but easy. It's multiple choice only, and you're restricted to eight questions. Which is just as well, because typing them out (if you don't have a USB keyboard) and then uploading a quiz can be agonisingly slow, to the point where it felt like it would've been quicker to chisel my questions into the side of a mountain and read them from a passing glacier.

Navigating other users' content in-game can also be a bit cumbersome, not least because you have to blunder your way through the menus with the chunky, Simon Says-style buzzer. Even so, the custom content is still the flashing round ruby in Buzz!'s quizzing crown. It's not about shooting people, or beating them

> up, or driving faster than them. It's about being cleverer than them because they're stupid, and then feeling smug about it. Ace.

Matt Elliott



Online round-up

With **Leon Hurley**



After an evening of installing and reinstalling patches, I was all ready to smash SOCOM Confrontation's stupid face in. But, you know what? It's still good. The no-respawning, 'die and you stay dead' thing means every match is torturously tense and, as

a result, super exciting. Admittedly, most games consist of a few minutes of nervously ducking behind walls before a single ringing shot means five minutes spectating, as everyone else competes to die last. But make it through a match alive and it's a-mazing. Accidently shouting "Yee-ha!" out loud amazing. Yeah, I did that.

It's all over for Nazi Zombies in Call Of Duty: World At War. Or at least it is for Nacht Der Untoten. the first map. After weeks of refining strategies and honing our telepathy, we held out until level 19. It was incredible. Once we



passed our previous best of level 14 it was like surfing a wave of "it'll never get better than this' on boards of crystallised joy. When we finally reached the end, running out of ammo in the face of hundreds of stampeding zombies, we went down like Englishmen. Screaming at the screen.



If I was one of those primitive but kind of hot aliens that lived on a backward planet in Star Trek then I'd think the planes in Battlefield 1943 only existed as flaming chunks of metal that fell from the sky, because it's the only state I see them in. I'd also probably

grunt hysterically and attack my headset the second a voice started coming out of it, but that's going off topic. Why do people keep trying to fly? I've tried, it goes like this: A few seconds of "WH000000!' elation as I lift off. A few seconds frowning as I chase the red icons that indicate there's an enemy out there somewhere. Then a brief look at the side of a mountain before it all goes black (Which is actually how I expect all my flights to end). They might as well just spawn pieces of wing and burning fuselage over the ground at the start and save time.

Download of the month

Technically the Killzone 2 Map Pack Bundle is amazing value. All three map packs, which were £4.79 each, for a bargain £9.99. Unless of course you'd



already bought them. In which case it'd be like walking into a room to find your girlfriend and her mates suddenly stop laughing and look at you quiltily. You know you've lost something you'll never get back (respect/money - same difference) but it's best for everyone if you just let it go and move on. If you haven't bought the maps, get them now. It's worth it just for the Wasteland Bullet, a level on a moving train, and the bolt gun - a weapon that staples people to walls, then blows them up.





mail@opm



COD6: The Professionals, Raiden's son in MGS: Rising, missiles, gratitude at last, and the cake of all cakes.

Dog days

The other day I was playing Fallout 3 and thought to myself, why am I attacking these innocent dogs? I'm sure if I gave them a hug they would stop ripping my limbs off. But as I approached, I remembered that I really didn't care how I treated the buggers, and accordingly fired 15 shots into the nearest pup. 20 minutes later I was approached by men in sheriff uniforms - they were pretty heavily armed for the RSPCA... Luke Jones, by email

PlayStation Official Magazine UK

Rabid dogs, happy holidays, time travel and the most amazing birthday cake... ever

Email us at opm@futurenet.com or write to Letters, OPM, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Dr Phil lists fourteen characteristics that are generally common to serial killers. One of these is a tendency to torture small animals. He doesn't mention whether irradiated attack dogs qualify as small animals, but he does go on to state that more than 60% of serial killers wet the bed beyond the age of 12. Dr Phil is amazing! It's like he wants to annoy them.

Famous faces

Do my eyes deceive me or is that Lewis Collins of The Professionals fame on the cover of the issue 33? I sincerely hope it is, and that he's joining the cast of Modern Warfare 2, because he is dead hard. Craig, by email

Consider your eyes deceived. Our cover star was Captain 'Soap' MacTavish, the dude you played in the original Modern Warfare, who'll now be your mentor in the sequel. So no Collins, sadly, but a scan of the cast list on IMDB reveals that Craig Fairbrass is back. Last time he played Gaz, but ended up with a bullet in his baseball capped head. Which presumably explains why he's listed as 'Ghost' this time. :-(

Eve eve

I am not the type to usually write letters, however, I was watching the Metal Gear This is Raiden, right? Or is it? Raiden's eyes are blue...

Text OPM

Text 'Letters' then your message to 87474-we'll include the best txts in the mag innit!* Solid: Rising teaser and I thought something was wrong. I found a picture of Raiden and compared it with the teaser and to my surprise discovered that the eyes are different. Raiden's eyes are blue but the character in the teaser has brown eves, so I did a little more looking around and found that Raiden's son has one brown eye and one blue eye. So I was wondering if the game is not about Raiden at all, but about his son John? Alex Price, by email

Good spot, and the internet is full of speculation that the different coloured eyes are proof that it's indeed Raiden Jnr. Either that or Hideo Kojima has hired Kate Bosworth (who also has one brown and one blue peeper) to do the motion capture. At least his hair would start to make some sense.

History today

I know time travel has been done in games a thousand times but how about being able to go back in time with all of today's weapons? Picture this: turning up at Christ's crucifixion with an apache helicopter mowing down thousands of Roman soldiers, only to go back to present day with no religion and total anarchy? Or going back to 1805 and the Battle Of Trafalgar with a modern-day

Tell us what's your hard drivel nail us at **opm@ futurenet** What's on my hard drive Lee Baker **□** Music Michael Jackson, Green Day, Lil'Chris, Linkin Park, Eminem, Lady Gaga, VidZone. Games Me and my bleeding foot, dog pics, pictures of me and my mates down at Dawlish, COD5, Burnout Paradise, Skate 2, Pure COD4, Uncharted, Crash Commando, Mirror's Edge, Prince Of Persia.



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Your letters

battleship kicking the bejesus out of the French and Spanish? Or alternatively the British? Only to go back to the present day and waking up to frogs' legs for breakfast? Maybe to 1431 and saving Joan Of Arc with your trusty fire extinguisher? Besieging an impenetrable medieval castle with a tank, and the odd 500lb laser-guided missile? Or 1940 and the Battle Of Britain with your jetpowered, super-deadly Typhoon? The scenarios and consequences are limitless - it's just the tonic for the domineering psychopathic adrenalin junkie in all of us. It would also make a great film.

Ian Parkinson, by email

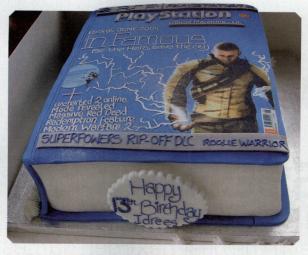
Genius. The only problem we can foresee is that there would be only be two difficulty levels: easy and really easy.

Fan mail, finally

I would just like to thank you for the amazing job you do and for helping me keep my sanity on my recent trip abroad. I was very happy indeed to find the latest issue of your mag on my doormat the day before I went on holiday and, along with a couple of cheeky visits online to the OPM Facebook page, your mag helped me cope with the lack of my PS3 for ten days. Please accept this picture as a tribute to all your hard work. To get it I had to walk across scorching sand (where I stood in some chewing gum) and enter the sea. which had hundreds of jellyfish in it (not to mention the beached whale behind me). So thank you for making my wonderful holiday just that little bit more enjoyable. Rich Ellershaw, by email

What is this holiday of which you speak? Is it like those two days between the other five days when we're allowed to do the writing at home? Thanks for the praise. Have a subscription to the magazine to help protect your unclothed body from that strange big ball of fire in the sky.





■ We were astounded when a pic of this cake arrived at the office. That's 'pic', not 'slice'.

MAIN

Help! I'm having trouble adding

funds to my account. I really

need to play Battlefield 1943.

A Only Visa or Mastercard

credit cards are

accepted, so if you

are trying to use a debit card it will

fail. Also, if you enter the details

incorrectly you can be locked out

for 24 hours. If the

please contact

Sony support on 08705 99 88 77.

☐ Pro tip: Never leave

the country without

problem continues,

Super sweet

I just wanted to let you know, that my son loved the June front cover of in Famous so much, that on his birthday I decided to have a cake made for him with that design on top as a surprise. As you can see from the picture, it turned out really well - he and his mates loved it so much that they didn't want to eat it! I would love it if you could wish him a happy 13th birthday - it would make his year to be mentioned in his all-time favourite magazine. Thank you.

Farkhanda Ali, by email

Here at OPM we make a point of fulfilling any request that comes covered in royal icing. So happy birthday! Note to other readers: send more cake.

Crowning glory

When I was playing LittleBigPlanet in the late hours of the night, I made my way through the levels that were available online. I found some ingenious versions of Gladiators and God Of War, and then a sudden inspiration hit me. Why not make a LittleBigPlanet awards, or some sort of way where the best levels of the month could be placed in a hall of fame? That would give plenty of inspiration to the LittleBigPlanet community, and it would be a great way of proving that you are one step above the competition.

Ryan Gill, by email

If you want to see what's been catching the eve of LittleBigPlanet's developer overlords, check out the blog at mediamolecule.com. They regularly award coveted design crowns to people who've made something particularly cool. Strangely, our sausage fingered attempts to recreate Wagner's Ring Cycle via the medium of hessian, pistons and confusing switches has yet to be featured heavily. Or indeed at all.

Off the **Wall**



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group

Grand designs "House-buying process? Sounds fun, they should make a game out of that! They could call it Theme Mortgage."

Matt Brown

Virtual girl

"I met my girlfriend over PS Home and I've never been happier. We've been going out less than a month but we're so close. Thanks Home." **Rhys Jones**

Mr Vain
"I fell in love over the internet once as well... hold on, no I didn't... it was in front of a mirror... Mmm, beautiful Nick!" Nick Leighton

Getting humped

"I fell in love over the net. Turned into a case of mistaken identity. It's weird I didn't know camels could type so well." **Holly Cooper**

Robin Hood: The Game

"I'd go for an Assassin's Creed-type game. Stealing from the rich to give to the poor. Alan Rickman would be the sheriff of Nottingham. Absolutely no Kevin Costner." Johnboyy Cole

Home truths "Home is full of randy teens that ain't getting any. Just don't go on it. It takes up 3GB that could be replaced with real porn." Adam Bowman

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directory_{PS3}

PS3 buyer's guide



PS3 Essential collection

Build the ultimate PS3 library with our no-filler guide to the best next-gen games so far

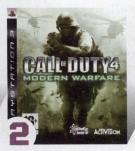


Platformer LittleBigPlanet

Unleash your inner Miyamoto by creating and sharing your own levels online using the brilliantly simple but canyon-deep editing tools in Sony's phenomenal platformer. Absolutely essential.



Pub Sony Dev Media Molecule



Shooter Call Of Duty 4 Modern Warfare

The SAS and US Marines invite you to fight the war on terror as Call Of Duty dumps WW2 for a modern-day setting. A beautiful, brutal and near flawless shooter.



Pub Activision **Dev** Infinity Ward



Action Grand Theft Auto IV

It's everything you love about GTA – the twisted characters, epic missions and savage humour – polished to perfection. Atrue modern masterpiece.



Pub Rockstar Games
Dev Rockstar North



Metal Gear Solid 4 Guns Of The Patriots

A typically esoteric but masterful end to Snake's saga, blending beautifully immersive action with a lifetime's worth of cut-scenes. Divisive but essential.



Pub Konami Dev Konami Productions



Platformer Bioshock

Epic first-person adventure set in a ruined underwater city that combines brilliant genetic weapons with beautiful design, tons of atmosphere, and a genuinely affecting story.



Pub Take Two Dev 2K Marin



Action-Adventure Uncharted Drake's Fortune

Treasure hunter Nathan Drake is after the fabled gold of El Dorado in this superb blend of action and physical puzzling. Think Gears Of War meets Tomb Raider.



Pub Sony Dev Naughty Dog



Shooter Killzone 2

Looks to die for, and endless waves of orange-eyed space Nazis aiming to ensure that's exactly what happens. Guerrilla's super-shooter is gritty, fierce and an utterly essential buy.



Pub Sony Dev Guerrilla



Fighter Street Fighter IV

Thumping return to form for the series, satisfying both the hardcore and newcomers like a particularly supple lady of the night. Lush visuals and sweet online play make this essential.



Pub Capcom
Dev Capcom



Shooter **Resistance 2**

A sequel that masterfully surpasses the original. Nathan Hale returns to fight bigger aliens on American soil and delivers on gameplay, guns and polish.



Pub Sony Dev Insomniac



Platformer Ratchet & Clank Tools Of Destruction

Platforming royalty return to save the galaxy. Exquisite graphics and a riotous arsenal of comedy weapons make this the pair's best interstellar outing yet.



Pub Sony Dev Insomniac



TEX OC

Big presentation andfor once-the gamepla to match for EA's glitz football star.



Fight Night Round 4

ver wondered what ruptured, bloodsmeared skin looks like sliding over bruise muscles and bone in slow motion? Fight Night is more than happy to fill you in.



Madden NFL 09

EA's all-conquering gridiron giant finally finds its nextgen form with this smart and hugely playable update.







Music SingStar

Sony's much-loved karaoke game steps up to next-gen with a neater interface, online options and tons of tunes via SingStore. Outkast's Hey Ya and The Killers' Mr Brightside are highlights.



Pub Sony **Dev** SCE Studios London



Action-RPG Fallout 3

The natural successor to Oblivion's RPG throne plays out in a post-apocalyptic America with Liam Neeson as your AWOL dad. An epic adventure without the self-indulgent sprawl.



Pub Bethesda Softworks **Dev** Bethesda Game Studios



Action inFamous

A big explosion tears Empire City to bits and gives hero Cole sparky superpowers in this sharp comic book adventure. Fluent climbing, frantic shooting and genuinely epic set-pieces make this a must-buy.



Pub Sony **Dev** Sucker Punch

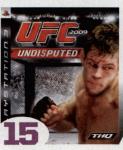


Sports FIFA 09

Impressively strong core gameplay on the pitch, ten-on-ten online matches and a new multiseason Be A Pro mode make this the top-scoring football choice on PS3.

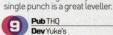


Pub EA
Dev EA Canada



Sports UFC Undisputed 2009

Fantastically organic round of mixed martial arts fighting, where the lack of HUD and chance of being KO'd by a



Pub THQ Dev Yuke's



Racer **Burnout Paradise** The Ultimate Box

The best racer on PS3, now repackaged with tons of DLC and featuring motorbikes and night-time in addition to searingly fast racing. Simply beautiful.



Pub EA **Dev** Criterion Games



Music **Guitar Hero World Tour**

Bigger, better, rockier. Battles are out, the set list is super strong, drums and vocals mean you don't need to wait for Rock Band 2, plus there's a studio too!



Pub Activision **Dev** Neversoft



Racer **Race Driver Grid**

Straight from the TOCA garage and into first place. Smooth mechanics, aggressive races and fine-tuned cars combine to create the most satisfying racer vet on PS3.



Pub Codemasters **Dev** Codemasters



Action Batman **Arkham Asylum**

Yes! Batman kicks ass just like Batman should - mostly in the dark, with loads of gadgets, brutal fighting, and brilliantly polished DC extras.



Pub Eidos **Dev** Rocksteady



Action **Dead Space**

Interstellar survival horror that robs from Bioshock, Resident Evil 4 and Event Horizon, but gets away with it thanks to looking beautiful, playing brilliantly and delivering some very big scares.



Pub EA
Dev EA Redwood Shores



MLB 09 The Show



A stumble for our traditional footy game of choice, although Master League remains an utrageously moreish timesink.



NHL 09

The old Mega Drive game had the tagline 'The hottest game on ice' which is hugely clichéd but still true of this slapshooter, 17 years on.

Virtua Tennis 2009

Signs of age creeping into Sega's once-imperious arcade classic, but (in a market of, um, two) it's still the lest tennis effort on PS3.



Slicker and more realistic than its big-featured EA rival, if you're after hoops and ball then this is your only man.

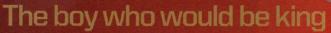
whois...



King Of All Cosmos

Katamari ruler is one mad majesty

In Katamari Damacy, the Prince might do all the work, but it's his dad who has all the power. The King Of All Cosmos is just that, the boss of everything: space, time - even you. But while his power is unlimited he's also barking mad, clumsy, easily distracted and has a very short temper. He's got some dubious parenting skills too, sending his tiny young son, the Prince, off to repair various galactic catastrophes on a regular basis - even though he's responsible for every single incident. Considering he's meant to be the ultimate power in the universe, he's wreaked endless havoc through his grade-A stupidity. Still, those tights are a strong look.



Child labour



Trophy unlocked



Street fighter



To the throne

away, leading to a teary reconciliation. Soon after, his dad fell ill, and passed the crown onto his son





Royal way of life





Accident man

Fan service



The Emperor

Harsh and unforgiving, the King's papa worked him hard as a child. The two eventually reconciled their differences and the Emperor is currently sleeping off an illness, leaving the King is phagas.





The Princess

Born some time after the events of Me & My Katamari on PSP the Princess is introduced in Beautiful Katamari, where she can be seen in a baby carriage and rolled up by the Prince.



In Jananese Katamari means 'lumn' Damacy (Damashii) is a pronunciation its literal translation is Lump Spirit.



Katamari Damacy was created by Keita Takahashi as part of a school project. It was described by Japanese press as a snowball simulator



Keita Takahashi wants to design a park in Nottingham. "Something soft, with lots of shapes where kids can roll around. It's okay if they occasionally get hurt too." (?!)



Takahashi designed a game where the Prince crushed buildings in a go-kart, by controlling a driver with a steering wheel in his head. Namco rejected it.



The King is an unlikely cosplay icon considering his complex, stupid outfit. This Tokyo Games Show pro is the best we've seen - he gets the face just right.



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